Nguyen Ngoc Bich (1911-1966): A Biography

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Publications (http://bit.ly/17Wuww9), Google scholar (http://bit.ly/1ftDOKF)

NOTE-1: The present master biography served as a foundation for the Wikipedia articles:
English (detailed info): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nguyen_Ngoc_Bich
English Draft (detailed info): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Draft:Nguyen_Ngoc_Bich

French (basic info): https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nguyen_Ngoc_Bich
Vietnamese (basic info): https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nguyen_Ngoc_Bich

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NOTE-2: This document is work in progress having many planned updates with the dates shown above.

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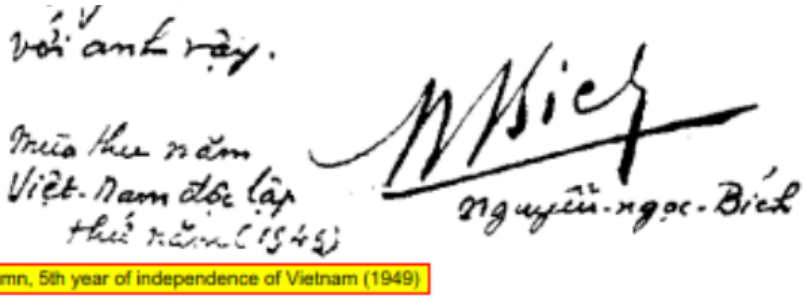
Foreword

In 2022, while translating and writing The Vũ-family history and genealogy, I (Vũ-Quốc-Lộc) consulted the well-known classic *Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary (Hán-Việt Tự Điển)* by Đào Duy Anh for the many Sino-Vietnamese words that my grandfather used in writing the Vũ-family genealogy in the 1960s. An example of a phrase that I had to look up in this dictionary was "*Mậu-Lam-Lang*" ("*Large-Blue-Sapphire*"), which was part of the long title "*Mậu-Lam-Lang, Quang-Hiển-Điện Thiếu-Khanh, Hào-Trung-Tử*" bestowed to one of our ancestors by a king of Vietnam. Many years ago, in high school in Vietnam, I remembered to own and use this dictionary in my Vietnamese-literature classes. Now actually using it again, outside of high-school classrooms, I developed a great admiration and appreciation for the scholarship of Đào Duy Anh, who not only had a deep knowledge of Vietnamese and Chinese, but also of French.

Some time in 2022, when I needed to look up the definition of some abbreviations in this dictionary, I read for the first time the open public letter written by Nguyễn Ngoc Bích to Đào Duy Anh to request the latter's permission to reprint his dictionary, which was important to standardize the way people were writing, and since the dictionary author could not be located due to war time in Vietnam. (I did not read this letter when I was in high school.) I was moved by Dr. Bích's well-written letter, and by his earnestness to serve his country and its people.

Dr. Bích signed and dated his open letter as "Autumn of the fifth year of Vietnam independence (1949)". Although the second and fourth digits in the year in his date were difficult to decipher (see the image below, even though the second digit could be guessed as "9", the fourth digit would be harder to be sure despite the similarity), and since Vietnam's independence was declared on 1945 September 2, Year 1 would be 1945, and Year 5 would be 1949, and thus these two digits would be "9". So I translated his date as: "Autumn, 5th year of independence of Vietnam (1949)," as shown in the yellow box in the image.



Autumn, 5th year of independence of Vietnam (1949)

"SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1945, the day Japan formally surrendered, was declared Vietnamese Independence Day. More than 400,000 people gathered in Hanoi's Ba Dinh Square that afternoon. There, while Viet Minh guards with drawn revolvers protected the podium, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam's independence beneath an umbrella that shielded the pages of his speech from the sun's glare." Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns (2017), *The Vietnam War: An Intimate History*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Chapter 1, *Déjà Vu, 1858-1961*. (No photo credit)

I then searched the web for "Nguyen Ngoc Bich," and found the Vietnamese Wikipedia page below that listed three persons with the same name "Nguyen Ngoc Bich":

Nguyễn Ngọc Bích - Vietnamese Wikipedia, version 22:28, ngày 15 tháng 8 năm 2020

Nguyễn Ngọc Bích là một tên gọi thông dụng tại Việt Nam. Một số nhân vật lịch sử Việt Nam cùng tên như:

- Giáo sư Nguyễn Ngọc Bích, sinh năm 1937 tại Hà Nội, mất năm 2016 khi trên chuyến bay từ Washington DC đến Manila; từng du học tại Mỹ; là Giám đốc đầu tiên của Ban Việt ngữ RFA
- Tên thật của nhạc sĩ Ngọc Bích, sinh năm 1924 tại Hà Nội, mất năm 2001 tại Hoa Kỳ; là một nhạc sĩ tiền chiến từng tham gia kháng chiến chống Pháp; về sau di cư vào nam
- Nhà cách mạng Nguyễn Ngọc Bích, sinh năm 1911, mất năm 1966; con của Nguyễn Ngọc Tương - một chức sắc Cao Đài có tinh thần dân tộc; từng tốt nghiệp Trường Kỹ sư Bách khoa và Trường Kỹ sư Cầu cống tại Paris; đầu năm 1940 về nước tham gia Việt Minh chống Pháp; rồi bị quân đội Pháp bắt giữ và trục xuất sang Pháp năm 1946

Nguyễn Ngọc Bích là một tên gọi thông dụng tại Việt Nam. Một số nhân vật lịch sử Việt Nam cùng tên như:

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- Tên thật của nhạc sĩ Ngọc Bích, sinh năm 1924 tại Hà Nội, mất năm 2001 tại Hoa Kỳ; là một nhạc sĩ tiền chiến từng tham gia kháng chiến chống Pháp; về sau di cư vào nam
- Nhà cách mạng Nguyễn Ngọc Bích, sinh năm 1911, mất năm 1966; con của Nguyễn Ngọc Tương - một chức sắc Cao Đài có tinh thần dân tộc; từng tốt nghiệp Trường Kỹ sư Bách khoa và Trường Kỹ sư Cầu cống tại Paris; đầu năm 1940 về nước tham gia Việt Minh chống Pháp; rồi bị quân đội Pháp bắt giữ và trục xuất sang Pháp năm 1946

Based on the age of these three persons, as the first two would be too young in 1949, and since the open letter by "Nguyen Ngoc Bich" said that he was living in Paris in 1949, I deduced that the third person above would be the author of the open letter. (At that time, I did not know what the background of this third "Nguyen Ngoc Bich" was, neither his birth year, nor his death year.)

During my search, I first found a plan to name "Nguyen-Ngoc-Bich street" in Can Tho in which there was a short biography of "Nguyen Ngoc Bich", and then found the website (https://bit.ly/NNChau) of Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Chau, who had amassed a large number of documents related to Nguyen Ngoc Bich (1911-1966), and proposed to Mr. Chau that he and I would collaborate to create an article for Dr. Bich on each Wikipedia (Vietnamese, English, French). (I almost did not look into Mr. Chau's website, as it was at the lower part of the screen, and at first sight, I did not think I would find information about "Nguyen Ngoc Bich".)

I did not realized that Mr. Chau was the son of Dr. Bich until I saw a moving farewell poem by Professor Hoang Xuan Han dedicated to Dr. Bich when the latter had to return to Vietnam to die of cancer: 4.Poème de Hoàng Xuân Hãn accompagnant Nguyễn Ngọc Bích à l'aéroport pour son retour au Việt Nam (1966).

At the end of the above poem web page, on the French-translation right side, Professor Hoang Xuan Han (vi) signed with a dedication: "Le camarade d'études et de pensée réécrit le poème (fait en 1966) pour le dédier à son fils Nguyễn Ngọc Châu" ("The classmate and ideological companion re-wrote the poem (made in 1966) to dedicate to his son Nguyễn Ngọc Châu"). That's when I realized that Mr. Chau was Dr. Bich's son.

For many years, starting from 2006 May 6 (see history of Nguyễn Ngọc Bích - Vietnamese Wikipedia), there was no article for *Nguyen Ngoc Bich (1911-1966)* on the Vietnamese Wikipedia, let alone the English and the French Wikipedias.

On 2023 Feb 20, at 1929 hours (GMT), I started the first version of the Vietnamese Wikipedia page Nguyen Ngoc Bich (1911-1966), based on an earlier version of the present biography.

Vu Quoc Loc, Urbana, Illinois, 2023 Mar 25 (See also *Marco Polo's Caugigu - Pham Ngu Lao's Dai Viet - 1285*, another by product of my family history, and the companion *Notes On Vietnam History*.)

Short biography 1

Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Bich
circa 1962

Nguyen Ngoc Bich (1911–1966) was an engineer, a hero in the Vietnamese resistance against the French colonists,[1][a] a medical doctor, an intellectual and politician, who proposed an alternative viewpoint to avoid the high-casualty, high-cost war between North Vietnam and South Vietnam.[2]

The Nguyen-Ngoc-Bich street in the city of Cần Thơ, Vietnam, was named after him to honor and commemorate his feats (of sabotaging bridges to slow down the colonial French-army advances) and heroism (being on the French most-wanted list,[3] imprisoned, subjected to an "intensive and unpleasant interrogation"[3] that left a mark on his forehead,[b] and exiled) during the First Indochina War.

Upon graduating from the École polytechnique (engineering military school under the French Ministry of Armed Forces) and then from the École nationale des ponts et chaussées (civil engineering) in France in 1935,[4] Dr. Bich returned to Vietnam to work for the French colonial government. After World War II, in 1945, he joined the Viet Minh, and became a senior commander in the Vietnamese resistance movement, and insisted on fighting for Vietnam's independence, not for communism.

Suspecting[c] of being betrayed by the Communist faction[c] of the Viet Minh and apprehended by the French forces, he was saved from execution by a campaign for amnesty by his École polytechnique classmates based in Vietnam, mostly high-level officers of the French army,[7] and was subsequently exiled to France, where he founded with friends and managed the Vietnamese publishing house Minh Tan (in Paris), which published many important works for the Vietnamese literature.[d] In parallel, he studied medicine and became a medical doctor. He was highly regarded in Vietnamese politics, and was suggested by the French in 1954 as an alternative to Ngo Dinh Diem as the sixth prime minister of the State of Vietnam under the former Emperor Bao Dai as Head of State,[e] who selected Ngo Dinh Diem as prime minister. While Bich's candidature for the 1961 presidential election in opposition to Diem was, however, declared invalid by the Saigon authorities at the last moment for "technical reasons",[6][4], he was "regarded by many as a possible successor to President Ngo Dinh Diem".[6][f][g]

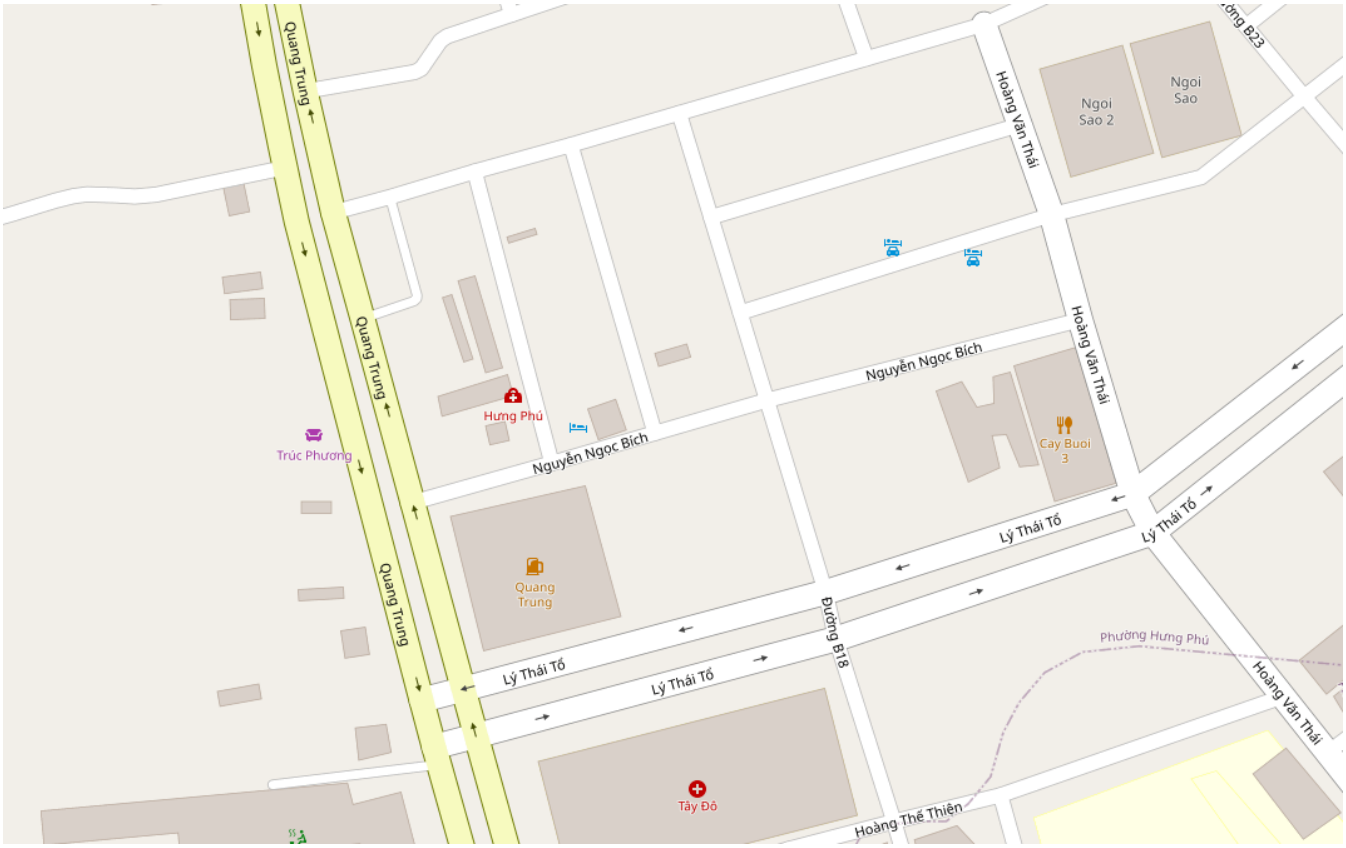
A large majority of the information in this article came from the master document *Nguyen Ngoc Bich (1911–1966): A Biography,*[8] which contains even more information, including primary-source evidence and photos, than presented here.

Important historical events that affected Bich's adult life, together with those mentioned in his 1962 paper (e.g., failed agrarian reform, napalm bombs, famine, conquest for rice, etc.) are summarized, in particular the atmosphere in which Bich had lived for 10 years working for the French colonialists (from 1935 to 1945), and the historical conditions that drove this French-educated engineer to become a "Francophile anticolonialist"[h][i] and to join the Viet Minh in 1945 (e.g., the 1940 brutal repression by the French colonialists, the 1945 power vacuum and general uprising). The key principle is to summarize a historical event only when it was directly related to Bich's activities. Care is exercised in selecting references and quotations that complement, but not duplicate, other Wikipedia articles at the time of this writing. For example, the history and the general use of napalm bombs, which Dr. Bich mentioned in his 1962 article, are

not summarized. Regarding the French using American-made napalm bombs in the First Indochina War, well-known battles[11] are also not summarized.

☛ DONE: Egm4313.s12 (talk) 16:30, 5 July 2023 (UTC)

Nguyen-Ngoc-Bich street, Can Tho, Vietnam



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nguyen_Ngoc_Bich_Street.png
Street-naming plan in Can Tho, Vietnam, with biographies, Can Tho Daily News, Appendix 1, 2019 Apr 09 Can Tho News

Short biography 2, Vietnamese

1. Nguyễn Ngọc Bích (1911 - 1966), nguyên Khu Bộ phó Khu 9

Kỹ sư, bác sĩ Nguyễn Ngọc Bích sinh tại làng An Hội, tổng Bảo Hựu, huyện Bảo An, nay thuộc huyện Giồng Trôm, tỉnh Bến Tre.

Khi còn nhỏ, ông ở cùng với bố, sinh sống ở nhiều nơi như Cần Thơ, Hà Tiên, Cần Giuộc và chủ yếu học tại Cần Giuộc. Năm 1926, lúc 15 tuổi, ông lên Sài Gòn học và tốt nghiệp Tú tài với số điểm rất cao, được đi du học bên Pháp. Tại Pháp, ông lần lượt học và lấy bằng kỹ sư của các trường Bách khoa Pa-ri, Cầu đường Pa-ri. Đây là 2 trường đại học danh tiếng của nước Pháp, cũng như trên thế giới từ trước đến nay.

Sau khi tốt nghiệp, ông về nước làm việc cho chính quyền bảo hộ, tại Sở Thủy lợi Sóc Trăng cho đến ngày Nhật đảo chính Pháp (09/3/1945). Sau Cách mạng tháng Tám rồi Nam Bộ Kháng chiến (23/9/1945), ông tham gia Kháng chiến ở khu căn cứ Sóc Trăng, phụ trách các đơn vị làm nhiệm vụ phá cầu, đường, như: cầu Cái Răng, cầu Nhu Gia…, chặn bước tiến quân Pháp của các Tướng Valluy, Nyo,… rồi được cử làm Khu Bộ phó Khu 9.

Tháng 7/1946, trên đường lên Đà Lạt dự Hội nghị Sơ bộ Việt Pháp để chuẩn bị cho Hội nghị Fontainebleau sẽ diễn ra ở

Pháp, ông bị thực dân Pháp bắt. Bị tra tấn và mặc dù dấu tung tích, nhưng người Pháp vẫn nhận ra ông sau một thời gian. Tướng Boyer de Latour tức giận định đưa ông ra Tòa án Tối cao xử tử hình với tội danh phản bội đất nước do ông có quốc tịch Pháp. Tuy nhiên, do trong Hội nghị Sơ bộ có điều khoản trao đổi tù binh, đồng thời do tác động của bạn bè của ông ở bên Pháp, thực dân Pháp buộc phải trả lại ông vào danh sách tù binh và buộc phải quay trở lại Pháp vào năm 1948.

Trở lại Pháp, ông kết hôn với bà Henriette Bui, người được coi là nữ bác sĩ đầu tiên của Việt Nam. Thời gian đầu mới qua lại, ông mở hiệu sách rồi theo học ngành y. Tuy nhiên, sau khi tốt nghiệp y khoa, nhận bằng bác sĩ, ông không hành nghề mà ở lại dạy Vật Lý tại Trường Y cho tới khi qua đời, sau này gia đình ông đưa hài cốt về Việt Nam.

Ông là Đại biểu Quốc hội Khóa I, Ủy viên Thường vụ Quốc hội.

(Cơ sở dữ liệu Ngân hàng tên đường và công trình công cộng thành phố Cần Thơ. Nguồn tư liệu Địa chí tỉnh Bến Tre)

Short biography 2, English

The above short biography 2 is translated into English as follows.

Nguyen Ngoc Bich (1911-1966), engineer, medical doctor, and former Deputy Head of Viet Minh Zone 9, was born in An Hội village, Bảo Hựu canton, Bảo An district, now in Giồng Trôm district, Bến Tre province.

When he was young, he lived with his father in many places such as Cần Thơ, Hà Tiên, Cần Giuộc and mainly studied in Cần Giuộc. In 1926, at the age of 15, he went to Saigon to study and passed the French Baccalaureate with very high scores, and was allowed to study abroad in France. In France, he in turn studied and obtained an engineering degree from the École Polytechnique and then from the École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, both located in Paris. These two engineering schools are among the most famous ones in France and in the world.

After graduation, he returned to Vietnam to work for the French colonial government, at the Sóc Trăng Water Resources Department (Sở Thủy lợi Sóc Trăng) until the Japanese coup d'état (on 9 March 1945). After the August Revolution and the Southern Resistance (23 Sep 1945), he joined the Vietnamese resistance at the Sóc Trăng military base area, in charge of units tasked with blowing up bridges, such as: Cái Răng bridge, Nhu Gia bridge…, to stop the French colonialist army advance under the French generals Valluy, Nyo, etc., and was appointed Deputy Head of Zone 9.

In July 1946, on the way to Đà Lạt to attend the Franco-Vietnamese Preliminary Conference to prepare for the Franco-Vietnamese Fontainebleau Conference that would take place later in France, he was arrested by the French colonialists. Tortured and despite concealing his true identity, the French still recognized him after a while. General Boyer de Latour was furious and intended to try him at the Supreme Court to be sentenced to death for treason due to his French nationality. But because there was a clause for prisoner exchange in the Da Lat Preliminary Conference, and due to the influence of his friends in France, the French colonialists were forced to reinstate him to a list of prisoners and to return him to France in 1948.

On his return to France, he married Henriette Bui, who was considered as Vietnam's first female doctor. At the beginning of his return, he opened a publishing house and studied medicine. After his graduation from medicine, receiving a medical doctor's degree, he did not practice but stayed to teach medical physics at the medical school until his death, after which his family brought his remains back to Vietnam.

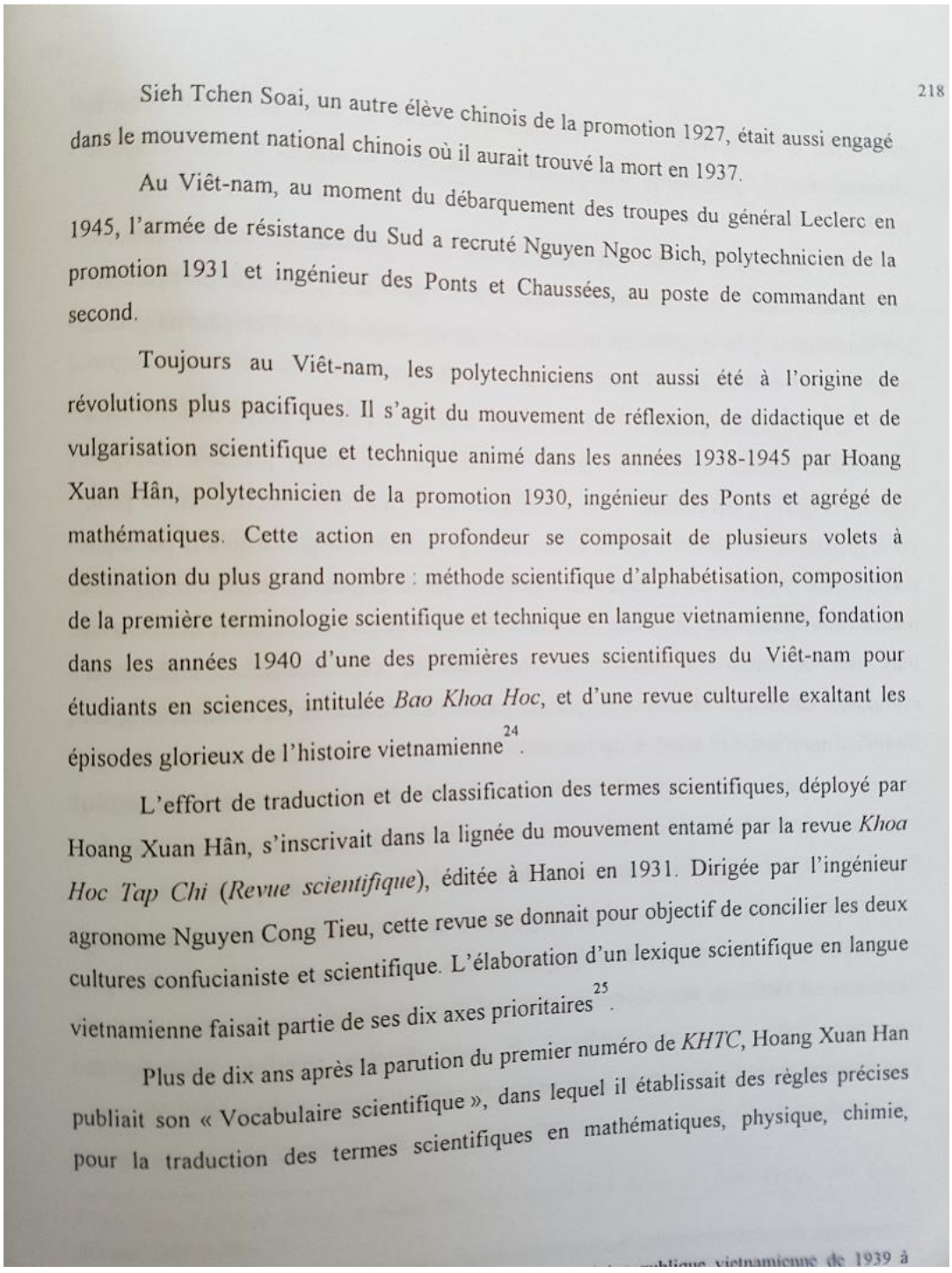
He was a Representative at the first National Assembly, and a member of the National Assembly standing committee.

(Can Tho City Street and Public Works Databank. Geography resource of Ben Tre province)

NOTE: The above short biography from The Can Tho Daily News contained some errors that are corrected in the longer biography below.

Bich joined the Viet Minh in 1945

Karvar, Anousheh, *Formation des élites scientifiques et techniques à l'École polytechnique française aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, PhD dissertation, Université Paris VII Denis-Diderot, 1997, p.218.



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Sieh Tchen Soai, un autre élève chinois de la promotion 1927, était aussi engagé dans le mouvement national chinois où il aurait trouvé la mort en 1937.

Au Viêt-nam, au moment du débarquement des troupes du général Leclerc en 1945, l'armée de résistance du Sud a recruté Nguyen Ngoc Bich, polytechnicien de la promotion 1931 et ingénieur des Ponts et Chaussées, au poste de commandant en second.

Toujours au Viêt-nam, les polytechniciens ont aussi été à l'origine de révolutions plus pacifiques. Il s'agit du mouvement de réflexion, de didactique et de vulgarisation scientifique et technique animé dans les années 1938-1945 par Hoang Xuan Hân, polytechnicien de la promotion 1930, ingénieur des Ponts et agrégé de mathématiques. Cette action en profondeur se composait de plusieurs volets à destination du plus grand nombre : méthode scientifique d'alphabétisation, composition de la première terminologie scientifique et technique en langue vietnamienne, fondation dans les années 1940 d'une des premières revues scientifiques du Viêt-nam pour étudiants en sciences, intitulée *Bao Khoa Hoc*, et d'une revue culturelle exaltant les épisodes glorieux de l'histoire vietnamienne[24].

L'effort de traduction et de classification des termes scientifiques, déployé par Hoang Xuan Hân, s'inscrivait dans la lignée du mouvement entamé par la revue *Khoa Hoc Tap Chi* (*Revue scientifique*), éditée à Hanoi en 1931. Dirigée par l'ingénieur agronome Nguyen Cong Tieu, cette revue se donnait pour objectif de concilier les deux cultures confucianiste et scientifique. L'élaboration d'un lexique scientifique en langue vietnamienne faisait partie de ses dix axes prioritaires[25].

Plus de dix ans après la parution du premier numéro de *KHTC*, Hoang Xuan Han publiait son « Vocabulaire scientifique », dans lequel il établissait des règles précises pour la traduction des termes scientifiques en mathématiques, physique, chimie,

publique vietnamienne de 1939 à

"In Vietnam, at the time of the debarkment of General Leclerc's troops in 1945, the resistance army of the South (the Viet Minh) recruited Nguyen Ngoc Bich, former student of the Ecole Polytechnique, class of 1931, and a graduating engineer of the Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées, to the position of Deputy Commander."

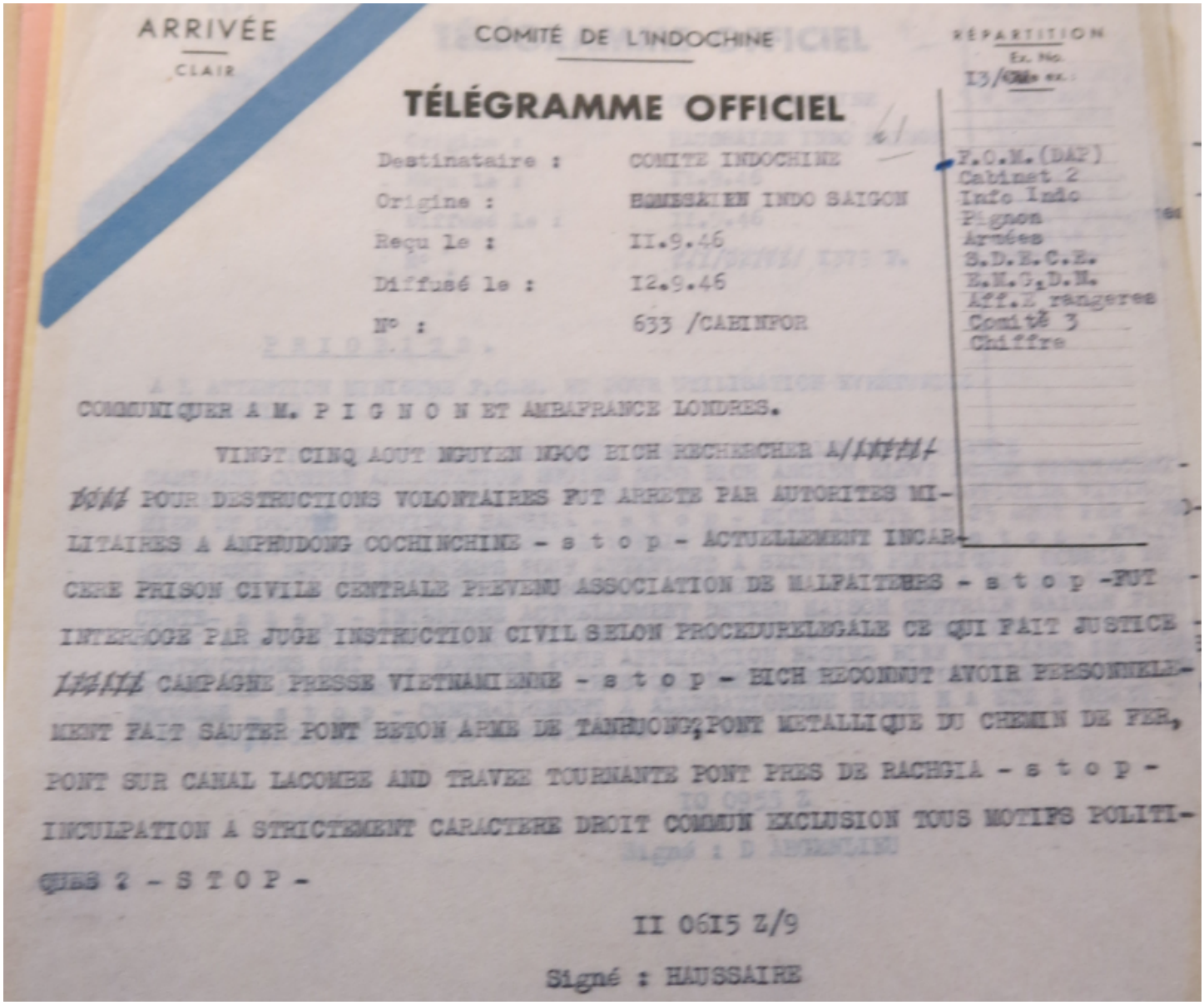
Official telegrams on the arrest of Dr. Bich

Telegram 1

To: Indochina Committee
From: Haussaire Indo Saigon (Admiral Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu)
Received on: 11 Sep 1946
Distributed on: 11 Sep 1946

NOTE: "Haussaire" was the abbreviation for the French title "Haute commissaire" [Tonnesson 2010, p. xxii], meaning "High commissioner"), who was Admiral Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu in 1946 (Tonnesson 2010, Foreword by Philippe Devillers, p.xiii6). ENDNOTE

This telegram, dated on 1946 Sep 11, showed that Dr. Bich was arrested in An Phu Dong (near Saigon), Cochin China (South Vietnam) on 1946 Aug 25.



ARRIVÉE
CLAIR

COMITÉ DE L'INDOCHINE

RÉPARTITION
Ex. No.
I3/ ex.

TÉLÉGRAMME OFFICIEL

Destinataire : COMITE INDOCHINE
Origine : HAUSSAIRE INDO SAIGON
Reçu le : II.9.46
Diffusé le : I2.9.46
N° : 633 /CABINFOR

F.O.M.(DAP)
Cabinet 2
Info Indo
Pignon
Armées
S.D.E.C.E.
E.M.G.D.N.
Aff.E. rangeres
Comité 3
Chiffre

COMMUNIQUER A M. P I G N O N ET AMBAFRANCE LONDRES.

VINGT CINQ AOUT NGUYEN NGOC BICH RECHERCHER A/[illegible]
[illegible] POUR DESTRUCTIONS VOLONTAIRES FUT ARRETE PAR AUTORITES MI-
LITAIRES A AMPHUDONG COCHINCHINE - s t o p - ACTUELLEMENT INCAR-
CERE PRISON CIVILE CENTRALE PREVENU ASSOCIATION DE MALFAITEURS - s t o p -FUT
INTERROGE PAR JUGE INSTRUCTION CIVIL SELON PROCEDURELEGALE CE QUI FAIT JUSTICE
[illegible] CAMPAGNE PRESSE VIETNAMIENNE - s t o p - BICH RECONNUT AVOIR PERSONNELLE-
MENT FAIT SAUTER PONT BETON ARME DE TANHUONG; PONT METALLIQUE DU CHEMIN DE FER,
PONT SUR CANAL LACOMBE AND TRAVEE TOURNANTE PONT PRES DE RACHGIA - s t o p -
INCULPATION A STRICTEMENT CARACTERE DROIT COMMUN EXCLUSION TOUS MOTIFS POLITI-
QUES ? - S T O P -

II 0615 Z/9

Signé : HAUSSAIRE

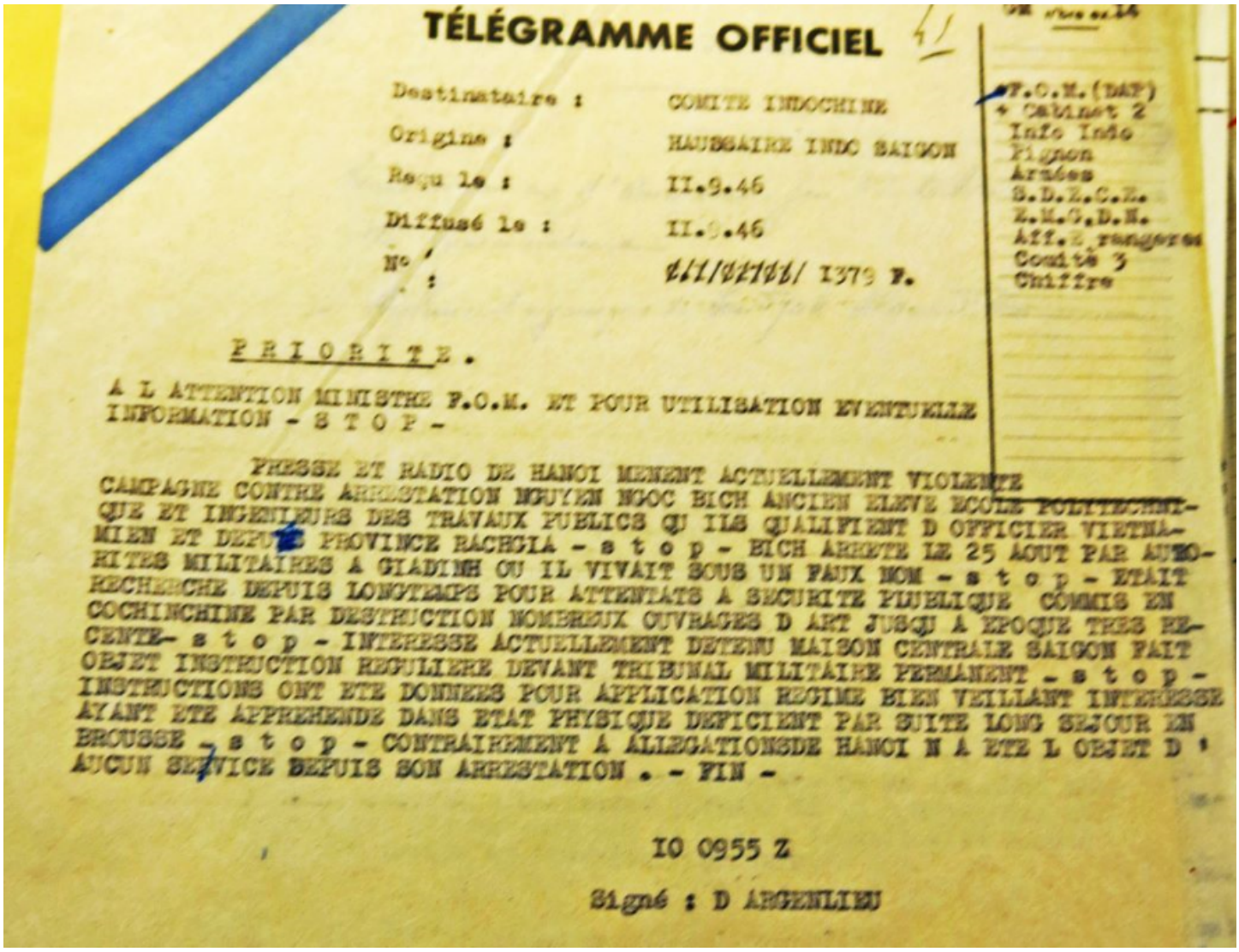
French Army archive.

Telegram 2

To: Indochina Committee,
From: Haussaire Indo Saigon (Admiral Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu)
Received on: 11 Sep 1946
Distributed on: 11 Sep 1946

Priority
To the attention of the minister of FOM (France d'Outre Mer, "France Overseas") and for eventual information.

In this telegram, High Commissioner d'Argenlieu wrote: "The press and radio in Hanoi are currently waging a violent campaign against the arrest of Nguyen Ngoc Bich, alumnus of the Ecole Polytechnique and civil engineer, qualified as Vietnamese officer and deputy of the Rach Gia province - stop - Bich arrested on 25 August by the military authority of Gia Dinh, where he lived under a false name."



TÉLÉGRAMME OFFICIEL

Destinataire : COMITE INDOCHINE
Origine : HAUSSAIRE INDO SAIGON
Reçu le : II.9.46
Diffusé le : II.9.46
N° : 1379 P.

P.O.M.(DAP)
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Comité 3
Chiffre

P R I O R I T E .

A L ATTENTION MINISTRE P.O.M. ET POUR UTILISATION EVENTUELLE INFORMATION - S T O P -

PRESSE ET RADIO DE HANOI MENENT ACTUELLEMENT VIOLENTE CAMPAGNE CONTRE ARRESTATION NGUYEN NGOC BICH ANCIEN ELEVE ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE ET INGENIEURS DES TRAVAUX PUBLICS QU ILS QUALIFIENT D OFFICIER VIETNAMIEN ET DEPUTE PROVINCE RACHGIA - s t o p - BICH ARRETE LE 25 AOUT PAR AUTORITES MILITAIRES A GIADINH OU IL VIVAIT SOUS UN FAUX NOM - s t o p - ETAIT RECHERCHE DEPUIS LONGTEMPS POUR ATTENTATS A SECURITE PUBLIQUE COMMIS EN COCHINCHINE PAR DESTRUCTION NOMBREUX OUVRAGES D ART JUSQU A EPOQUE TRES RECENTE - s t o p - INTERESSE ACTUELLEMENT DETENU MAISON CENTRALE SAIGON FAIT OBJET INSTRUCTION REGULIERE DEVANT TRIBUNAL MILITAIRE PERMANENT - s t o p - INSTRUCTIONS ONT ETE DONNEES POUR APPLICATION REGIME BIEN VEILLANT INTERESSE AYANT ETE APPREHENDE DANS ETAT PHYSIQUE DEFICIENT PAR SUITE LONG SEJOUR EN BROUSSE - s t o p - CONTRAIREMENT A ALLEGATIONS DE HANOI N A ETE L OBJET D AUCUN SERVICE DEPUIS SON ARRESTATION . - FIN -

IO 0955 Z

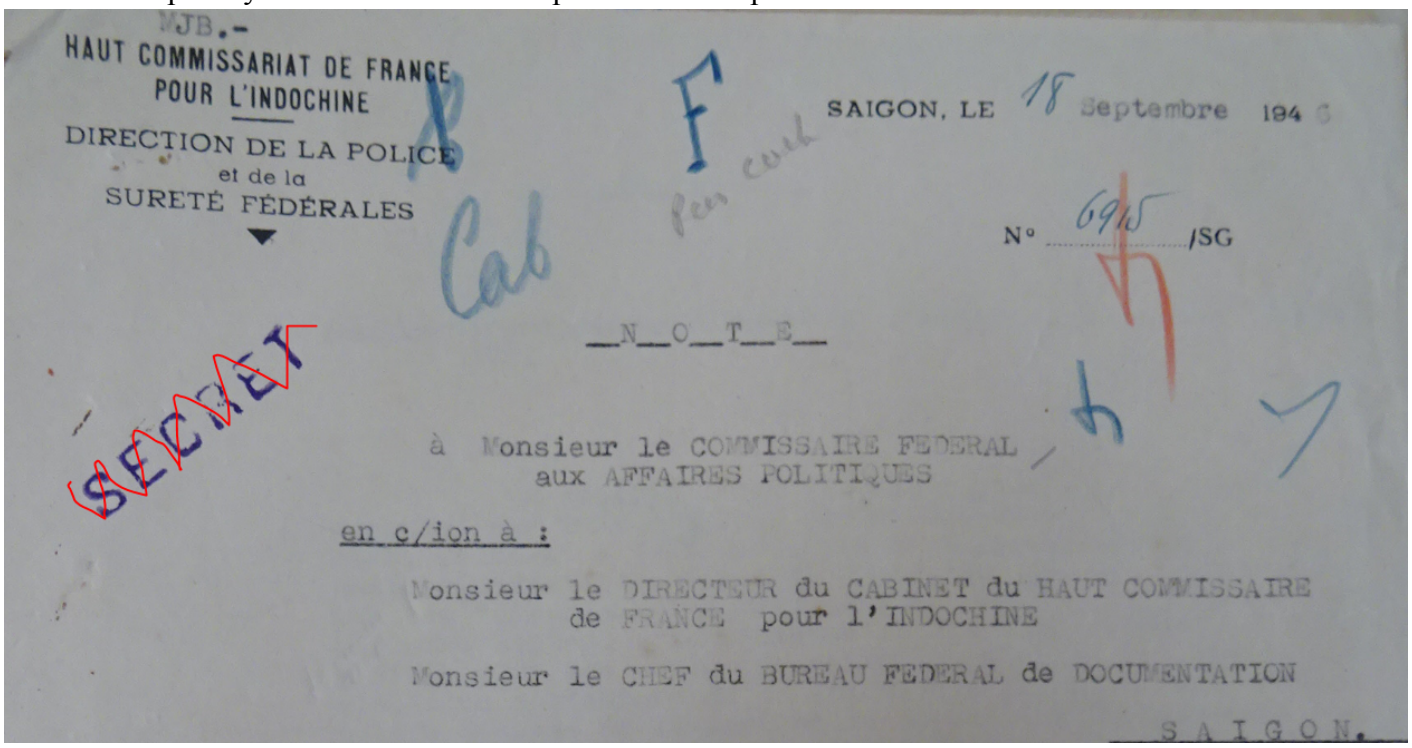
Signé : D ARGENLIEU

French Army archive.

NOTE:
Telegram 1 and Telegram 2: Nguyen Ngoc Chau to Vu Quoc Loc on 2023
French police report on the repercussion of Bich's arrest: Nguyen Ngoc Chau to Vu Quoc Loc on 2023.04.11 via email, which also included Telegram 2 again.

French police report on repercussion of Bich's arrest

Below is a report by the French colonialist police on the repercussion of Bich's arrest.



MJB.-

HAUT COMMISSARIAT DE FRANCE
POUR L'INDOCHINE

DIRECTION DE LA POLICE
et de la
SURETÉ FÉDÉRALES

SAIGON, LE 18 Septembre 1946

N° 6915 /SG

SECRET

__N__O__T__E__

à Monsieur le COMMISSAIRE FEDERAL
aux AFFAIRES POLITIQUES

en c/ion à :

Monsieur le DIRECTEUR du CABINET du HAUT COMMISSAIRE
de FRANCE pour l'INDOCHINE

Monsieur le CHEF du BUREAU FEDERAL de DOCUMENTATION

__S A I G O N.__

OBJET: Répercussions à Hanoi de l'arrestation de NGUYEN NGOC BICH.

Référence: ma note n° 6618 /SG du 11.9.46.

Comme suite à ma communication citée en référence, j'ai l'honneur de vous transmettre, sous ce pli, une note d'information établie par un fonctionnaire de mes services relatant les répercussions à Hanoi, de l'arrestation de l'ingénieur NGUYEN NGOC BICH.

COMMISSARIAT FEDERAL
AUX AFFAIRES POLITIQUES
Arrivée le... 19.9.46.....
N°..... 15.152.....

Le DIRECTEUR de la POLICE
et de la SURETE FEDERALES en INDOCHINE

HAUT COMMISSARIAT DE FRANCE
DIRECTION DE LA POLICE ET DE LA SURETE FEDERALES
POUR L'INDOCHINE

— N — O — T — E —

OBJET: Répercussions à Hanoi de l'arrestation de NGUYEN -NGOC-BICH.

Un meeting s'est déroulé à Hanoi, le 8 courant organisé par TRAN HUU LIEU membre du Comité central du Viet-Minh. Celui-ci a fait connaître à la population que le but de cette manifestation était de protester contre l'arrestation par les "colonialistes français" de NGUYEN NGOC BICH. Le Commissaire Général à la Jeunesse et aux Sports DUONG DUC HIEN a déclaré de son côté, que cette arrestation constituant une violation à l'accord du 6 Mars devait engendrer une protestation unanime de la part de la population Vietnamienne et se traduire par la mise en oeuvre de tous les moyens, y compris la violence, afin d'obtenir sa libération.

Enfin TRAN HUU NGHIEP, chef du Service Médical Militaire du Viet-Nam (Quan-Y-CUC-VIET-NAM), après avoir attaqué violemment la Politique française au Nam-Bo, a terminé son discours en proclamant notamment "qu'à la prochaine provocation le Viet Nam saura répondre aux français par le sang, et par la poudre".

Une seconde réunion composée de tous les fonctionnaires du BAC BO s'est déroulée au Palais du Gouvernement à Hanoi dans le but de demander aux dirigeants Vietnamiens la mise en liberté immédiate de NGYEN NGOC BICH.

Le journal "CUU QUOC" relate de son côté, qu'après son arrestation NGUYEN NGOC BICH aurait été traîné dans la rue et frappé à coups de crosse avant d'être conduit à un poste où il aurait été torturé par les français. Ce quotidien ajoute que l'accusation retenue à son encontre serait la destruction de trois ouvrages d'art dans la région de HAU - GIANG.

Sous la rubrique "Nouvelle du Nam-Bo, ce journal reproduit enfin les déclarations de THAN NGOC THACH, chef du Comité administratif du Nam-Bo et de NGUYEN VAN TAO, représentant de l'armée et de la population du NAM BO, qui accusent les français de la mort de THAI VAN LUNG et de l'arrestation de NGUYEN NGOC BICH. Ils font appel en outre aux "camarades" français, anglais, russes, américains et chinois en vue d'intervenir auprès des autorités françaises pour obtenir son élargissement.

Notability: Mentions in Vietnam-history books

Dr. Bich was mentioned in several Vietnam-history books by respected Vietnam scholars. Details are given below.

Ellen J. Hammer

Ellen J. Hammer was the first American historian with a deep knowledge of the French colonial rule in Indochina in the early 1950s during the French Indochina war. Dr. Hammer's highly influential book titled *The Struggle for Indochina*---published in 1954 well before the United States sent American troops to Vietnam in the 1960s—described the events, politics, and historic personalities leading to the French Indochina war. Her works were considered among the must-read books by respected historians on Vietnam history, as Osborne 1967 wrote: "Indeed, any serious student of Viet-Nam will have either read Devillers [see French Cochinchina, Ref. 40], Lacouture, Fall, Hammer and Lancaster's studies already, or will be better served by reading them first hand." To give a historical context within which Dr. Bich fought the French colonists, there is no better English source than Dr. Hammer's book.

Wikipedia

Ellen Hammer - Wikipedia

Obituary

Ellen Hammer, 79; Historian Wrote on French in Indochina (Published 2001)
By Eric Pace, March 26, 2001
Summary

Ellen J. Hammer, a historian who wrote an influential book about Indochina and Vietnam before the Vietnam War. As a scholar, "she was one of the few Americans that got into Vietnam before the American buildup there" in the mid-60's, said Douglas Pike, a historian and director of research at the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University.

She earned a doctorate in public law and government from Columbia, where she specialized in international relations, and worked for several years on the research staff of the Council on Foreign Relations in Manhattan.

She became known in the early 1950's as an authority on French colonial rule in Indochina. By the mid-60's, she had studied Vietnamese problems in a number of long stays in Vietnam.

Mr. Pike, who went to South Vietnam in 1960 as a Foreign Service officer, said Dr. Hammer wrote one of the few books that people arriving in that era found valuable: "*The Struggle for Indochina*" (1954), which examined the struggle for freedom from France.

The struggle for Indochina

https://archive.org/details/struggleforindoc0000hamm_h0h0/page/n6/mode/2up

The American dilemma

Page n15 (Preface page xii)
The American dilemma is compounded of a number of different elements. The United States has entangled itself in a war in a distant corner of Asia in which it resolutely does not want to participate and from which it equally resolutely cannot abstain. It has committed itself to the cause of France and of Bao Dai, but enough of

the old spirit of anticolonialism is left to make this a somewhat unsavory commitment: it cannot bring itself wholly to ignore the fact that the free world looks less than free to a people whose country is being fought over by a foreign army. Aware that a lasting peace can be built only on satisfaction of the national aspirations of the Indochinese, the United States must at the same time conciliate a France reluctant to abandon her colonial past. At a further remove, the United States, as a champion of the right of peoples to self-determination, backs the claim of the Vietnamese to make their own free choice in the world; but if they should choose Communism, as seems not unlikely, is it then also the American obligation to save them from themselves?

Bernard B. Fall

Bernard. B. Fall (1966), *The Two Viet-Nams: A political and military analysis*, Praeger, New York.

Page 57

. . . orders arrived from theater headquarters stating that no arms and ammunition would be provided to French troops under any circumstances. I was allowed to proceed with "normal" action against the Japanese in Indochina provided it did not involve supplying French troops. . . . General Wedemeyer's orders not to aid the French came directly from the War Department. Apparently it was American policy then that French Indochina would not be returned to the French. The American government was interested in seeing the French forcibly ejected from Indochina so the problem of postwar separation from their colony would be easier. . . . While American transports in China avoided Indochina, the British flew aerial supply missions for the French all the way from Calcutta, dropping tommy guns, grenades and mortars.

Page 68

This difference in instructions, which had never been ironed out or even discussed at the highest level, since F. D. R. had never communicated to the French his ulterior plans for Indochina — and it is unlikely that Churchill had done so, either — was bound to bring about a crisis in Franco-American relations that, to a certain extent, has never been thrashed out and dogs relations between French and American missions in Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam to this very day. Finally, after French threats to infiltrate their men into Viet-Nam by other means (and after the British had on their own parachuted French teams into Viet-Nam), Wedemeyer relented and allowed Sainteny to leave for Hanoi in the company of the OSS team of Major Archimedes L. Patti. Relations between Sainteny and Patti were never very cordial, especially after Patti informed Sainteny that the Potsdam agreements had made no mention of French sovereignty over Viet-Nam and that the French, therefore, no longer had any "rights to intervene in affairs which were no longer of any concern" to them.[11]

Page 68

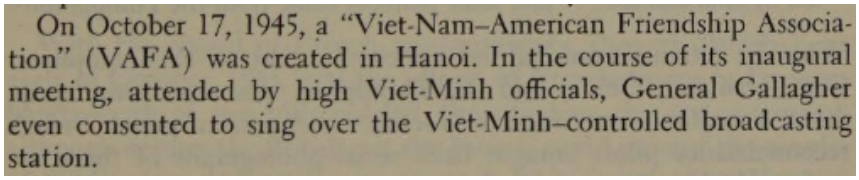
French official reaction to V-J Day came in a telegram addressed by Calcutta to M-5 in Kunming: "Caught unprepared by Japanese capitulation, [Government] counts upon us to take care of most urgent matters." Implicitly, Calcutta "passed the buck" to M-5 and its energetic leader, Jean Sainteny, a Resistance hero from France whom de Gaulle had recently appointed to head the Kunming mission. In Sainteny's view, his mission was obvious: to reassert French sovereignty at the earliest possible moment and liberate all French citizens imprisoned by the Japanese and the Viet-Minh. The American theater commander, General Wedemeyer, saw his own mission as defined by the Roosevelt instruction of November 3, 1944, and as in the case of the 14th Air Force's aborted supply missions to Sabattier, he adhered strictly to it.10 Thus, various obstacles were laid in Sainteny's path when he attempted to have his group embarked on U.S. aircraft leaving with OSS personnel for Viet-Nam. When the French finally received their own aircraft, Wedemeyer bluntly forbade "the departure from Kunming of any airplane, whatever its nationality, for Hanoi."

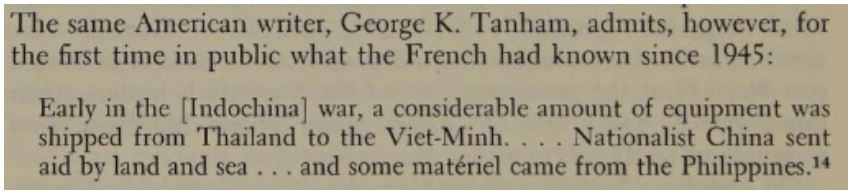
… the British had on their own parachuted French teams into Viet-Nam…

Thoroughly disillusioned, Sainteny radioed his superiors in Calcutta that he was "face to face with a deliberate Allied maneuver to

Page 69
evict the French from Indochina" and that "at the present time the Allied attitude is more harmful than that of the Viet-Minh." In fact, the arrival of the Chinese units made the situation even worse. Accompanied by the U.S. Combat Section, South China Command, under Major General Philip E. Gallagher, the Chinese and their American advisers acted as if the French did not exist. Although their attitude toward Sainteny's M-5 could be explained on the basis of orders from Washington, their personal attitude of callousness toward the Frenchmen who, two months after V-J Day, were still being detained in prison camps by mixed guard units of Japanese and Viet-Minh exacerbated matters needlessly.

Page 69
The Frenchman Paul Mus, a severe critic of his own country's policies in the Far East, tells in his remarkable *Viet-Nam—Sociologie d'une guerre* of the visit of an American officer to one of the grimmer prison camps. When a young French officer cried out to the American to liberate them from their imprisonment, he retorted: "Those fellows must have had a reason for putting you in there. So why don't you just stay where you are?" The name of that young French officer was Jean Ramadier; two years later, his father was to become Premier of France. Humiliation was piled upon humiliation: On September 10, 1945, the Chinese bodily evicted Sainteny and his group from the French governor's building they occupied, and when the official surrender of the Japanese forces in Tongking took place, on September 27, no French flag was flown (although Soviet and Viet-Minh flags were prodigally displayed), and gallant General Alessandri, who in the meantime had returned from Yunnan, was offered seat No. 115 at the ceremony, behind the Viet-Minh leaders (then unrecognized) and a bevy of Chinese junior officers. No Frenchman accepted an invitation to attend the ceremony.


On October 17, 1945, a "Viet-Nam–American Friendship Association" (VAFA) was created in Hanoi. In the course of its inaugural meeting, attended by high Viet-Minh officials, General Gallagher even consented to sing over the Viet-Minh–controlled broadcasting station.

Page 70

The same American writer, George K. Tanham, admits, however, for the first time in public what the French had known since 1945:

> Early in the [Indochina] war, a considerable amount of equipment was shipped from Thailand to the Viet-Minh. . . . Nationalist China sent aid by land and sea . . . and some matériel came from the Philippines.[14]

Page 70
What he [American writer George K. Tanham] refrains from stating explicitly that all this equipment from Thailand, China, and the Philippines was American equipment, brought in on American aircraft, by American pilots. French reconnaissance pilots brought back aerial photographs of those aircraft parked on Communist-held airstrips at Vinh and Thanh-Hoa, in northern Central Viet-Nam, unmarked except for their serial numbers—and some of those pilots, now discharged and flying in Indochina for civilian airlines, maintain that a small number of the American "privately chartered" aircraft flying at present in behalf of the Lao Government bear the same serial numbers as those identified earlier on the Viet-Minh airfields.

Page 71

With the arrival of French reinforcements, through British help, early in October, 1947, and the release of French troops in Japanese hands south of the 16th parallel, the situation changed somewhat, although neither the British nor the French could prevent the murder of 450 French and Eurasian women and children at the Cite Heyraud housing development near Saigon on September 25 by mobs incited by the South Vietnamese Communist leader Tran Van Giau. It was Giau who, in the face of the strengthening French position, ordered a scorched-earth policy for South Viet-Nam and engaged in terror tactics that the Hanoi regime found, for the time being, at least, premature and embarrassing. Giau was quickly seconded by Nguyen …

US cost for First Indochina War

Leonard P. Liggio

Liggio, Leonard P. (1967), A Bernard Fall Retrospective, *Left and Right: A Journal of Libertarian Thought*, Volume 3, Number 3 (Spring-Autumn 1967).

Leonard Liggio was a classical liberal author, research professor of law at George Mason University, and executive vice president of the Atlas Network in Fairfax, Virginia, US.

On February 21, 1967, while on patrol with U.S. Marines north of Hue, in South Vietnam, Bernard Fall, distinguished French-born expert on Vietnam and a professor at Howard University, was killed by a land-mine. *Left and Right* here presents reviews of Fall's last two works, recently published, on Vietnam.

Bernard B. Fall (1966), *Viet-Nam Witness 1953-66*. Praeger, New York. 363 pages. $6.95.

Fall's final comparison between the French war which ended at Geneva in 1954 and the present United States War concerns the State Department-Pentagon claim that the French effort was defeated by the "collapse" of public support in France. Fall answers that it was the military defeat of the French forces (for which the United States paid 80% of the costs) which caused the French public to demand an end of the war in Vietnam.

“It was not civilian morale at home that placed 16,000 troops at Dien Bien Phu and allowed them to be defeated there. Noisy students on U.S. college campuses cannot be held responsible because 96,000 South Vietnamese troops left their units at one time or another this year. . .”

When the French war in Vietnam ended at Geneva in 1954 the United States was already a major participant. paying almost the entire cost of the war and already committing U.S. Air Force units to the effort.

Back to Ellen Hammer

Page 150

AGREEMENT ON MARCH 6 [1946]

Page 152

The French were in no position to fight, Marius Moutet, Minister of Overseas France, explained to the French Assembly a year later when he was justifying the agreement his government finally signed with Ho Chi Minh. In March 1946 there were some 185,000 Chinese soldiers north of the sixteenth parallel and some 30,000 Japanese, many of them still in possession of their arms. All the French troops in the north were disarmed and held prisoner in the Hanoi Citadel, where the Japanese had left them; there were also some 25,000 Frenchmen living in Hanoi. Only 15,000 French troops were in Saigon and they had to travel several days to get to Haiphong before they could go to Hanoi. Without a prior accord with the Viet Minh, Moutet did not believe that they would have found many Frenchmen alive when they did arrive.

Page 153

On March 6, this was finally accomplished. Sainteny signed an agreement in Hanoi with Ho Chi Minh and Vu Hong Khanh (representing the VNQDD) by which France recognized the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam as "a free state with its own government, parliament, army and finances, forming part of the Indochinese Federation and the French Union." The French Government pledged itself to a referendum to determine whether the three Ky—Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin China—should be united. In return, the Vietnamese agreed not to oppose the French army when it arrived in Tonkin and northern Annam to relieve the Chinese.

Page 153
A military annex to the March 6 Agreement fixed the number of troops to occupy Viet Nam at 25,000—15,000 Frenchmen and 10,000 Vietnamese—under over-all French command.[9] The French soldiers in charge of the Japanese were to leave as soon as their job was completed, with a deadline of ten months. Units guarding naval and air bases were to have the length of their stay determined later. As to the rest—the units which would join the Vietnamese in keeping order north of the sixteenth parallel—they were to be withdrawn in five equal annual installments. In 1952 no French troops would be left in Viet Nam, with the possible exception of those guarding bases. This assurance that

Page 154
the French would evacuate the country was one of the key provisions of the agreement which made it possible for the Vietnamese to agree to the return of the French troops to Tonkin.

Page 154
Dictated on both sides by opportunism, the March 6 Agreement enabled the French and the Vietnamese each to achieve their limited aims. The French came back to northern Indochina and not a Vietnamese gun was fired against them. They kept most of their troops south of the sixteenth parallel, but from that time on elements of the French army were to be found in Hanoi, Hai-Phong, and other sections of Tonkin and northern Annam. Vietnamese strength remained concentrated in the north, but the Ho Chi Minh government also had military as well as political representatives in the south. The Viet Minh had won recognition from France and counted on the promise of the military annex that in five years all French troops would be out of Viet Nam. If by some chance that promise were not carried out, the Vietnamese had at least won a breathing space in which to consolidate their forces and prepare for the future.

Page 154
The Viet Nam radio announced the arrival of General Leclerc's troops in Hanoi on March 18 and asked the people of Hanoi to show them the greatest courtesy.

Opposition from the French colonists

Page 155
Although it is clear now that the March 6 accord was a major diplomatic victory for the French, Frenchmen at the time were also divided on the terms of that agreement. In Paris, although official optimism was tempered by the misgivings of informed observers, the tendency was to regard the accord as evidence of a new and enlightened policy. But it was all very well for people in France to approve the accord; they were not on the spot to apply it. Most of the Frenchmen in Saigon, who had known Indochina under the prewar regime when their privileges were secure and French control was unchallenged, saw no reason for change and regarded the March 6 Agreement as evidence of weakness and blundering. This sentiment was prevalent in administrative circles around d'Argenlieu, and when the Admiral returned to Indochina from France, he declared his amazement—"yes, that is the word, my amazement that France has such a fine expeditionary corps in Indochina and yet its leaders prefer to negotiate rather than to fight."[11] Elements of the French military in Indochina were also strongly opposed to the agreement because it called for a military evacuation of the country. They expressed their opposition in good faith but it followed from all of this that the agreement

would be applied neither wholeheartedly nor even in good faith by the men upon whom depended whether or not it would be translated from words to action.

Leclerc intended to uphold the March 6 Agreement

Page 155

However, General Leclerc, who called upon Ho Chi Minh as soon as he arrived in Hanoi, had every intention of honoring the March 6 Agreement.

Page 156

But General Leclerc's political role in Indochina was about over. With Admiral d'Argenlieu back in the country to assume political control, relegating Leclerc to strictly military functions, and with the colonial administration and the High Commissioner openly antagonistic to the March 6 Agreement, there was little left for Leclerc to do. On July 14, 1946, General Leclerc, at his own request, was removed from his post and named Inspector of Land Forces in North Africa.

Clashes in the South

Page 157

In Viet Nam, the March 6 accord did not bring peace. Marius Moutet described it as an "accord of good faith," and that description was the key to its failure. It was simply an armistice that provided a transient illusion of agreement where actually no agreement existed. The months that followed indicated that without some agreement on fundamentals, the French and the Vietnamese would not keep good faith.

Page 157

Even after the March 6 Agreement, guerrilla fighting continued in the south. The French wanted Cochin China to remain walled off from the other Vietnamese lands, as they had kept it since their arrival in the south during their piecemeal conquest of Indochina. The Vietnamese, on the other hand, were determined to regain Cochin China, even if they had to compromise on their independence to do it. They thought that they had won their point in the March 6 Agreement, which they read as admitting the unity of the Vietnamese countries, leaving a referendum to settle only the forms of administrative reorganization within their union. However, when the separatist Cochin Chinese Advisory Council, which d'Argenlieu had established in February, protested against the accord, complaining that it infringed on Cochin Chinese sovereignty, Commissioner Cédile was reassuring. He said at a meeting of the Council on March 12 that the accord "did not imply any recognition by the French Government of a single government for the three Annamese countries." At this session of the Advisory Council Dr. Tran Tan Phat, a separatist leader, declared: "As Annamese we think like Indochinese, but we act like Cochinchinese."[14] He was murdered by nationalists at the end of the month.

Pages 157-158

Nguyen Ngoc Bich

Page 157

Outside Saigon the various nationalist resistance groups, weakened though they were by the months of warfare with the British and French, still controlled large sections of the Cochin Chinese countryside. Ho Chi Minh proposed to General Leclerc the sending of mixed Franco-Vietnamese commissions to establish peace in Cochin China after the signing of the March 6 accord, but the General saw no reason for this in what was supposed to be French territory; he suggested instead that Ho Chi Minh order his followers by radio to cease fighting. When Ho sent his own emissaries to the south, they were arrested by the French who continued to regard Cochin China as a French colony, claiming a free hand there until the referendum could be held. This led to difficult local problems, as in the case of the Vietnamese emissary sent by one Vietnamese zone commander [Nguyen Ngoc Bich] to discuss a cease-fire with the local

Page 158
French commanding officer. The emissary was unceremoniously informed that the French expected complete capitulation—the surrender of arms and prisoners—and that this was an ultimatum. They had until the 31st of March to comply; if they failed to do so, the fighting would begin again. Before the Vietnamese left French headquarters, the French officer took his name and it was soon public knowledge that the French had put a price on his head as well as on that of his commander, Nguyen Ngoc Bich. In this particular region of Cochin China fighting resumed by the end of the month.

Gettleman 1967, Vietnam bibliography

Marvin E. Gettleman 1967, A Vietnam bibliography, Assistant Professor of History, Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, with the assistance of Sanford L. Silverman, Liberal Arts Bibliographer. The Libraries, Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, Oct 19. (Internet archived 2022.01.01)
https://cdn.mises.org/Left%20and%20Right_3_3_7_0.pdf?token=p777VAHo

43. HAMMER, Ellen J. The Struggle for Indochina. (Institute of Pacific Relations). (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1954). A superb study of the French effort to hold on to Indochina.

43. HAMMER, Ellen J. The Struggle for Indochina. (Institute of Pacific Relations). (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. 1954). A superb study of the French effort to hold on to Indochina.

Chester L. Cooper

Chester L. Cooper was an American diplomat and a key negotiator in many critical agreements in the 1950's and 60's, beginning with his involvement in the Geneva Conference on Indochina in 1954.[6] In his 2005 memoir *In the Shadows of History: 50 Years Behind the Scenes of Cold War Diplomacy*, "he recounted his association with a constellation of historic figures that included John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Nikita S. Khrushchev and Ho Chi Minh".[6][d] Dr. Cooper[e]—who acquired a deep knowledge of Vietnam history from his years in Asia, from 1941 to 1954, first working for the Office of Strategic Services[f] in China, then for the CIA in 1947, and subsequently became head of the Far East staff of the Office of National Estimates in 1950[7]—devoted some three to four pages to describe Dr. Bich in his Vietnam-history book *The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam*, in particular some aspects of Bich's resistance activities.

Encyclopedia.com

Cooper, Chester L. 1917–2005 | Encyclopedia.com

Obituary

Chester Cooper, 88, a Player in Diplomacy for Two Decades, Is Dead - The New York Times
By Margalit Fox, Nov. 7, 2005
Below is a summary of important points in relation to Vietnam history.

Chester L. Cooper, a retired United States diplomat who in the 1950's and 60's was a backstage player in many of the most critical negotiations of the cold war, held senior positions with the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Council, the State Department and other agencies.

In his book, "In the Shadows of History: 50 Years Behind the Scenes of Cold War Diplomacy", he recounted his association with a constellation of historic figures that included John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Nikita S. Khrushchev and Ho Chi Minh.

An authority on Asia, Mr. Cooper was involved with United States policy on Vietnam, starting with his participation in the Geneva Conference on Indochina in 1954, then later as the chief American negotiator at the Paris peace talks for a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam War.

Mr. Cooper also wrote "The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam", which was reviewed in the New York Times by Ronald Steel, who wrote: "Chester Cooper was there when most of it happened, and even though he pulls a few punches, he has given us the most revealing and the most important inside story of the war that we have yet had, or are likely to get for a long time."

Lost crusader?

Lost crusader? Chester L. Cooper and the Vietnam War, 1963–68

Chester Cooper was the noted author of *The Lost Crusade: The United States in Vietnam* (1970), but his role as a Vietnam policymaker has been unduly overlooked. Working for the CIA and for the National Security Council under Kennedy and Johnson, he grew disenchanted with American policy and sought to inhibit the US military role in Vietnam. He then joined the State Department to seek a negotiated peace. In exploring Cooper's involvement in the Vietnam War, the article fills a gap in the literature and addresses questions of military strategy, decision-making, the prospects of a negotiated peace, and internal dissent.

The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam

Search https://archive.org/details/lostcrusadeameri00coop/page/n6/mode/2up?q=ngoc+bich

Page 122

One such patriot was Dr. Nguyen Nhoc Bich. By profession Bich had been an engineer— a graduate of France's prestigious Ecole Polytechnique. He was a consequential and revered figure. His father was one of the founders of a branch of the Cao Dai sect, and his family had long been highly respected in the southern part of Vietnam, particularly in the area of Ben Tre Province. Bich had joined the Viet Minh because he was convinced there was a chance for non-Communist nationalists to band together with the Communists in a broad coalition to establish a genuinely free and independent Vietnam. Bich, as well as many other educated, non-Communist nationalists, was influenced by the French political tactic of alliances between moderate and Communist groups to achieve short-range objectives. The problem in Vietnam, however, was that the non-Communist nationalists had no significant political base of their own and were either swallowed up or destroyed by the Viet Minh's well-organized, politically aggressive Communist leadership.

As commander of the Viet Minh forces in the Delta during the late 40s, Bich became one of the most popular local heroes. During 1946 the Viet Minh hierarchy became concerned that Bich might pose a threat to the aims of the Viet Minh in the southern part of Vietnam, and by the end of that year Ho apparently decided that Bich had served his purpose in the Delta. He was “invited” to move North to become a member of the Viet Minh political and military headquarters in Hanoi. Bich was reluctant to leave his command, not only because of his desire to continue the fight against the French, but also because he felt uneasy about leaving his base of power. Nonetheless, he made his way north via the nationalist underground to Hanoi.

A day or two before Bich was to report to the Viet Minh headquarters, the French discovered his hiding place near Hanoi. Since he was on the French "most wanted" list, he was subjected to an intensive and unpleasant interrogation. He had no doubt

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that summary execution was next on the program. In desperation he wrote to the "Old Boy" association of graduates of the Ecole Polytechnique. It was the old school tie that saved Bich's life; the bonds of this most elite of educational institutions made brothers even of enemies. Whether the Viet Minh had actually betrayed him to French agents is not known for certain, but Bich always suspected that this was how he had been discovered. In any case, he sensed that he would be in great danger if he reported to the Viet Minh, and he quickly took advantage of the French offer to spirit him and his wife out of Vietnam. On his arrival in France, Bich embarked on a new career in medicine. When he discovered some time later that he had cancer of the throat, he spent the rest of his life using himself as a guinea pig for his study and research.

After the Four Powers agreed at Berlin on February 18, 1954 to hold an international conference on Vietnam, Dr. Bich and other Vietnamese non-Communist nationalists pressed the French for complete independence. This was finally and grudgingly granted on April 28. As the weeks passed and it became increasingly apparent that the French faced certain military defeat, the quest for independence developed into an anxious search for a nationalist leader who could provide the Vietnamese people with a non-Communist alternative to Ho Chi Minh. A group of Vietnamese intellectuals began to meet regularly in Paris to discuss various possible candidates. While the group was by no means united in its views, it reached early common agreement that Bao Dai could not provide the necessary inspiration or leadership and that a strong Prime Minister was needed.

At an early point in the deliberations Bich was regarded as a leading possibility for the Prime Minister's post because of his almost mystical appeal to millions of Vietnamese. But many in the Paris group, especially the

conservative members, found Bich's style too rigid and idealistic. Moreover, he was immersed in his medical research and lacked political experience. And so Bich was rejected.

Page 124

Diem left the United States for Europe in May, 1953. He stayed at the Benedictine monastery of Saint Andre-les-Bruges in Belgium and used his new quarters as a base to lobby on his own behalf among the Vietnamese community in France. Diem first met with the Paris group early in the spring of 1954 and, according to one person present, made a "very bad impression." Bich walked out after one exposure to Diem and refused to associate himself with any of the subsequent deliberations. One member of the group reported that Diem was "obscure" and "murky" and that his ideas were "obsolete." He remembered feeling that Diem was "stupid." And of course Diem talked "incessantly." Despite all this, however, Diem had strong supporters and even those who were lukewarm or even opposed to him had no strong alternative candidates to put forward.

Page 125

Justice William O. Douglas gave Diem a boost in 1953: "Ngo Dinh Diem ... is a hero in Central and North Vietnam, with a considerable following in the south too. . . . Ngo Dinh Diem is revered by the Vietnamese because he is honest and independent and stood firm against the French influence. There are few officials in the Vietnamese government who have that reputation." Aside from Douglas, Diem's only consequential contact in Washington was Senator Mike Mansfield, whom he met once or twice. He was brought to the attention of Ambassador Joseph Kennedy and he met Cardinal Spellman, but Spellman paid little atten- tion to him until after he became Prime Minister. To the extent that official Washington knew of him (and of Bich), it was through the efforts of Professor Milton Sacks of Brandeis University, who in the early fifties was a junior member of the State Department.

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Nguyen Ngoc Bich, 122-123, 124

Joseph Buttinger

Joseph A. Buttinger was a Nazi fighter, an ardent advocate for refugees of persecution, and a "renowned authority on Vietnam and the American war" in that country.[9] In 1940, he helped founded the International Rescue Committee, "a nonprofit organization aiding refugees of political, religious and racial persecution," and while "working with refugees in Vietnam in the 1950s, he became immersed in the history, culture, and politics of that nation."[9] His scholarship was in high demand during the Vietnam War. The New York Times described his his two-volume Vietnam-history book, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*,[10][1][h] as "a monumental work" that "marks a strategic breakthrough in the serious study of Vietnamese politics in America" and as "the most thorough, informative and, over all, the most impressive book on Vietnam yet published in America."[9] Joseph Buttinger wrote in *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, Vol. 2 that Dr. Bich was "the resistance hero" whom "Diem had no success" to convince to join his cabinet.

Wikipedia

Joseph Buttinger - Wikipedia

Obituary

Joseph A. Buttinger, Nazi Fighter And Vietnam Scholar, Dies at 85 - The New York Times
By Bruce Lambert, March 8, 1992
Below is a summary of the obituary.

Joseph A. Buttinger, a Nazi fighter who became an advocate for refugees of persecution and a renowned authority on Vietnam and the American war there.

Mr. Buttinger was born on an impoverished Bavarian farm. After being imprisoned for several months in 1934, he became chairman of the Socialist underground and a top leader of the anti-Nazi movement.

Fled to Paris in 1938. In the resistance, he met a courier and eventually married her. In 1939, several months before the fall of France, the couple moved to the United States.

In 1940, Mr. Buttinger helped found what became the International Rescue Committee, a nonprofit organization aiding refugees of political, religious and racial persecution.

Working with refugees in Vietnam in the 1950's, he became immersed in the history, culture and politics of that nation. He formed an organization, American Friends of Vietnam, and became a friend and supporter of the ruler, Ngo Dinh Diem. Later, disillusioned with Diem's dictatorial ways, Mr. Buttinger renounced him.

He was a respected historian and analyst of current events in Vietnam. As the United States went to war with Vietnam, his scholarship was in demand. His evolving view was that American policy was historically and morally misguided and doomed to fail.

His two-volume work, "Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled" (Praeger, 1967) was heralded in a review in The New York Times as "a monumental work" that "marks a strategic breakthrough in the serious study of Vietnamese politics in America" and as "the most thorough, informative and, over all, the most impressive book on Vietnam yet published in America."

His other books included: "In the Twilight of Socialism" (Praeger 1952), "The Smaller Dragon -- A Political History of Vietnam" (Praeger, 1958), "A Dragon Defiant: A Short History of Vietnam" (Praeger, 1972) and "Vietnam: The Unforgettable Tragedy" (Horizon, 1977).

Summary of the book

Stefania Dzhanamova, August 11, 2021
https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/7760244

Reviews by Vietnam scholars

Osborne 1967

Viet-Nam: The Search for Absolutes
Author(s): Milton Osborne
Source: International Journal, Autumn, 1967, Vol. 22, No. 4, Fifty Years of Bolshevism (Autumn, 1967), pp. 647-654
https://www.jstor.org/stable/40200203
Summary:

For Joseph Buttinger in his two volume study of recent Vietnamese history, *Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled*, the absolute emerges in the form of harsh French colonialism and the failures of the late President Ngo-Dinh-Diem. Using compilative historiographic techniques, Buttinger gathered information from a wide range of sources, and faithfully catalogued varying viewpoints and accounts of events.

Major sections of his study represent compilation or expansion of well known studies by French, English and American authors, such as Devillers, Lacouture, Fall, Hammer and Lancaster.

In short, the favourable reception already accorded Mr. Buttinger's study springs from its size and through the indication of the energy which the author has expended. The book provides immediate answers of past mistakes in a time when there is a crisis of confidence in the official explanations which have been presented to explain Washington's involvement in Viet-Nam. Implicit in these answers is a strong degree of national self-criticism.

Lancaster 1961

Donald Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1961, reprinted by Octagon Books, New York, 1975.

Gettleman 1967, Vietnam bibliography

Marvin E. Gettleman 1967, A Vietnam bibliography, Assistant Professor of History, Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, with the assistance of Sanford L. Silverman, Liberal Arts Bibliographer. The Libraries, Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, Oct 19. (Internet archived 2022.01.01)
https://cdn.mises.org/Left%20and%20Right_3_3_7_0.pdf?token=p777VAHo

53. LANCASTER, Donald. The Emancipation of French Indo-China. (Royal Institute of International Affairs). (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961). The best single book on the history of all Indochina to about 1955. (Selection printed in no. 32 above).

53. LANCASTER, Donald. The Emancipation of French IndoChina. (Royal Institute of International Affairs). (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961). The best single book on the history of all Indochina to about 1955. (Selection printed in no. 32 above).

Reviewed Work: The Emancipation of French Indochina by Donald Lancaster
Review by: Truong-Buu-Lam
https://www.jstor.org/stable/20067458

Reviewed Work: The Emancipation of French Indochina by Donald Lancaster
Review by: Emanuel Sarkisyanz
Zeitschrift für Politik, NEUE FOLGE, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1965), pp. 415-420
https://www.jstor.org/stable/24222785

Thompson 1968

Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled. Volume I, from Colonialism to the Vietminh; Volume II, Vietnam At War. By Joseph Buttinger. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger. 1967. Pp. x, 663; 667–1346. $18.50 the set)

Virginia Thompson
The American Historical Review, Volume 73, Issue 3, February 1968, Pages 890–891,
https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/73.3.890
Published:
01 February 1968

Wurfel 1969

Book review: Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled. Vol. I, From Colonialism to the Vietminh. Vol. II, Vietnam at War. BY JOSEPH BUTTINGER. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967. xi, 1346 pp. Maps, Appendixes, Selected Bibliography, Index, n.p.
The Journal of Asian Studies , Volume 28 , Issue 2 , February 1969 , pp. 438 - 440
DOI: https://doi.org/10.2307/2943048

Index

p. 1324

Nguyen Ngoc Bich, 641(9), 850, 1112(92)

NOTE: p. 641 is in Vol. 1, whereas p. 850 and p. 1112 are in Vol. 2.

Vol.1

Vietnam: A dragon embattled, Vol. 1

Search Vol.1 for “Ngoc Bich”
https://archive.org/details/vietnamdragonemb01butt/page/640/mode/2up?q=ngoc+bich

Note 9, p. 641

9. Miss Hammer cites the case of an emissary sent by Nguyen Ngoc Bich. The French took down his name when he came to their headquarters to negotiate a cease-fire, and "it was soon public knowledge that the French had put a price on his head as well as on that of his commander, Nguyen Ngoc Bich" (ibid., p. 158).

Vol.2

Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, Vol.2
Search Vol.2 for “Ngoc Bich”
https://archive.org/details/vietnamdragonemb02butt/page/1112/mode/2up?q=ngoc+bich

Page 850

Diem left Paris for Saigon on June 24, accompanied by his brother Luyen, by Tran Chanh Thanh, and by Nguyen Van Thoai, a relative of the Ngo family and the only prominent exile willing to join Diem's Cabinet. With others, such as the resistance hero Nguyen Ngoc Bich, Diem had no success. He tried unsuccessfully to win Nguyen Manh Ha, a Catholic who had been Ho Chi Minh's first Minister of Econom- ics but who had parted with the Vietminh in December, 1946. These men, and others too, rejected Diem's concept of government, which clearly aimed at a one-man rule. Nor did they share Diem's illusions about the chances of preventing a Geneva settlement favorable to the Vietminh. Diem apparently believed that the National Army, no longer fighting under the French but for an independent government, would quickly become effective and reduce the gains made by the Vietminh.

Note 92, p. 1112

[Note] 92. Nguyen Bao Toan sought political refuge in Cambodia. As he fled South Vietnam, he saw the Social Democratic Party, whose head he had been, purged and put under pro-Diem control. When later he went to the United States, where he protested against continued support of Diem (see The New York Times, March 17, 1956), I also saw him. He struck me as an honest man, and even then I believed that the accusations against him were slander, a tactic used by the regime against anyone who openly opposed it, as was later the case with Vu Van Thai. Toan took up residence in France, together with a number of other self-exiled Vietnamese. [Robert] Scigliano mentions him and Nguyen Ngoc Bich as "perhaps the two most popular of the Paris oppositionists" (op. cit., pp. 23-24, 79-80, and 82).

Arthur John Langguth

Wikipedia

A. J. Langguth - Wikipedia

Our Vietnam: The war, 1954-1975

Langguth, Arthur John (2002), *Our Vietnam: The war, 1954-1975*, Simon & Schuster, New York.

Goodreads

Our Vietnam: The War 1954-1975 by A.J. Langguth | Goodreads

PDF book

https://archive.org/details/ourvietnam00ajla

Page 84

> [In 1954, after the 1954 Geneva Conference] Diem was not the only candidate for prime minister under Bao Dai, and the French considered him hostile to their business interests, which they expected to survive the change in government. The names the French put forward could be dismissed as collaborators, however, and the one serious alternative to Diem, Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Bich, had his own liabilities. Although not a Communist himself, Bich had fought with the Vietminh, and his father was prominent in the Cao Dai, an eclectic sect that revered Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, Joan of Arc and Victor Hugo. Despite a medical degree, Bich could seem so mystical that Diem

Page 85

> looked hard-headed and practical to the Vietnamese colony in Paris and to Foster Dulles, who saw that he would be dependably anti-Communist.

Page 681

> 84 Nguyen Ngoc Bich's background: Author's interview, Chester Cooper, Washington, D.C., Feb. 24, 1999.

Page 756

Nguyen Ngoc Bich, 84-85

Stein Tønnesson

Stein Tønnesson, *Vietnam 1946: How the War Began*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

Search philippe devillers Histoire du Viêt-Nam de 1940 à 1952 pdf

Devillers, Lacouture 1969, *End of a War: Indochina 1954*: An expanded English version of La fin d'une guerre; Indochine 1954, by Jean Lacouture and Philippe Devillers, first published in 1960
https://archive.org/details/endofwarindochin00devi/page/n5/mode/2up

Review of Tønnesson 2010

David Testa, H-France Review Vol. 13 (April 2013), No. 39

Scholars have published a whole series of excellent monographs concerning the liminal years between colonialism and independence in Vietnam, beginning with Philippe Devillers' *Histoire du Vietnam de 1940 à 1952* and including more recently David Marr's *1945: The Quest for Power*.[1] Now, Stein Tønnesson's excellent *Vietnam 1946: How the War Began* adds critical depth to an understanding of the choices made in France and Vietnam that led to a war that lasted from 1946 and 1954, rather than a paradigm-shifting postcolonial collaboration and transition that was never realized. To a greater degree than other texts, Tønnesson strives to present and understand the interior dialogue of the Communist leadership of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), and his dissection of the events in Hanoi in December 1946 are his greatest contribution to understanding how the *politique d'accord* that had been worked out between the French and the leadership of the DRV unraveled.

The book is focused quite tightly on the sixteen months following the end of World War II. Tønnesson points squarely at a radicalized local leadership in Hanoi for making a choice in mid-December 1946 that the whole communist movement would pursue conflict rather than continued cohabitation. Likewise, he targets a conservative French military for rejecting accommodation and evolution. In holding these two collective agents responsible for following a path to war, he leaves some questions that others will have to answer, such as the origin of violent radicalism within the Vietnamese communist movement and how a French military, so aware of its weaknesses and its isolation, could gamble on conflict once again.

Director of PRIO

In 2001, I became director of PRIO [Peace Research Institute, Oslo], the same institute who hosted my work as a graduate student 1981–82 and as a doctoral student in 1988–91.

Bao Dai to de Gaulle

Foreword by Devillers

Pages xiii-xiv

In a moving message on August 20 [1945], the emperor of Vietnam, Bao Dai, had just warned France's leader Charles de Gaulle: "I beg you to understand that the only means of safe-guarding French interests and the spiritual influence of France in Indochina is to recognize the independence of Vietnam unreservedly and to renounce any idea of reestablishing French sovereignty or rule here in any form. . . . Even if you were to reestablish the French administration here, it would not be obeyed, and each village would be a nest of resistance. . . . We would be able to understand each other so easily and become friends if you would stop hoping to become our masters again."

Mar 6, 1946 Agreement

Chinese trap

Page 4

Page 4
This book assumes as its point of departure that the "*policy of agreement*" (*politique d'accord*) that the two parties sought to apply in 1946 might have been viable, that it was possible to prevent the war that followed, and that this remained possible until December 19, 1946. Hence, the proximate cause of Vietnam's string of wars was not the long history of French colonial rule, the Japanese coup against the French colonial regime in March 1945, the Vietnamese August Revolution, or even the violent repression carried out in southern Vietnam by French and British forces in 1945-46. Neither was it the failure of Franco-Vietnamese negotiations in the summer of 1946—they did not fail completely, but ended in a *modus vivendi*. Rather, the proximate cause of the Vietnam wars was the breakdown of Franco-Vietnamese cooperation during November-December 1946 and the outbreak of armed struggle in the streets of Hanoi at 2003 hours on December 19. The First Indochina War broke out that day, and this led to a sequence of wars with dreadful consequences, primarily for the Vietnamese themselves and their immediate neighbors, but also for France, the United States, and the world.

British-French violent repression

Gary Donaldson

Donaldson, Gary (1996). *America at War Since 1945: Politics and Diplomacy in Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War*. Praeger, Westport, Connecticut.

Page 75
It was late August 1945, just days before Ho declared the independence of Vietnam [on 1945 September 2], when the first French troops of the postwar era finally arrived in Saigon—with the aid of the British. Along with some French citizens, these French soldiers went on a rampage through the city, killing, raping, and destroying property. On August 24 the Viet Minh, not particularly strong in the South, retaliated against the French attacks. A Viet Minh terrorist squad attacked the Saigon suburb of Cite Herault, killing 150 French civilians. On October 2, a truce was signed between the French and the Viet Minh, but in that same week French reinforcements arrived under General Jacques Philippe Leclerc, and with help from the British and a large number of reamed Japanese soldiers, the French pushed the Viet Minh out of Saigon and into the countryside.

Ward and Burns 2017

Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns (2017), *The Vietnam War: An Intimate History*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.
Chapter 1, *Déjà Vu, 1858-1961*.

The British, challenged by nationalist movements in their own Asian colonies, favored the swiftest possible return of French rule in Indochina.

The Viet Minh called for a general strike and mass demonstration, one organizer recalled, in hopes of attracting British and French reprisals that would "cause many casualties and attract world attention." In response, General Gracey imposed martial law, then released and armed fourteen hundred French prisoners of war. Together with a mob of angry French civilians, they stormed through the streets, clubbing any Vietnamese who got in their way. They lynched Viet Minh officials, looted shops, and raised the French flag above the city's most important buildings as a sign that France was once again in charge.

At dawn the next day, a Vietnamese mob shouting "Death to Europeans" and bent on revenge stormed through a French neighborhood, butchering some 150 men, women, and children and carrying off others who

were never seen again.

Lieutenant Colonel A. Peter Dewey cabled one more report to his superiors: "Cochinchina is burning," he wrote. "The French and British are finished here and we [the United States] ought to clear out of southeast Asia."

Back to Stein Tonnesson's book.
Page .4

Page 4
This book challenges two established wisdoms. The first is the widespread belief that the March 6 agreement reflected a temporary ascendancy of liberal reformers or moderate pragmatists within the French decision-making system. They are said to have perceived the need to accommodate Vietnamese nationalism and make a deal with Ho Chi Minh. This book demonstrates that the French were already prepared to wage war against the DRV in March 1946, and that they took a gigantic gamble in dispatching an invasion force to the port city of Haiphong. This was no mere show of force, but part of a seriously prepared operation to seize control of the main centers in the north, including Hanoi. Arriving at Haiphong in the morning of March 6, the French fleet sailed right into a Chinese trap. The French thought they had secured Chinese support for disembarking troops in the north in a treaty signed in Chongqing on February 28, but Chiang Kai-shek's government fooled them. When the French ships approached Haiphong harbor, the Chinese stood ready to resist the French onslaught and actually fired at the ships. Meanwhile, the Chinese were pressuring both the Vietnamese government and a French team of negotiators in Hanoi to sign a deal on behalf of their two nations. Neither the French nor the DRV could afford an open confrontation with China, so under Chinese coercion, they underwrote concessions that both parties hoped to be able to retract at a later stage. The March 6 accords were a fragile peace imposed by China.

Page 5-6
This book challenges the dominant interpretation of December 19 and holds that the outbreak of war that day could have been averted. The March 6 agreement, although signed under Chinese pressure, encouraged and strengthened those French and Vietnamese leaders who wanted to spare human lives and avoid the financial and political costs of a long-drawn-out war. President Ho himself was one. The leader of the French government at the time the war broke out, the veteran socialist Léon Blum, was also dedicated to the pursuit of peace, and Marius Moutet, the socialist minister for Overseas France, who signed the modus vivendi agreement with Ho Chi Minh on the night of September 14–15, continued to defend his "policy of accord." The main warmongers, who must bear the brunt of the responsibility, not only for the seizure of Haiphong in November, but also for the outbreak in Hanoi, were a French triumvirate in Saigon, consisting of High Commissioner Admiral Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu, Supreme Commander General Jean-Etienne Valluy, and Federal Commissioner of Political Affairs Léon Pignon, who sought a clean break with the communist-dominated Vietnamese regime.

Page .94

THE APPLICATION OF THE AGREEMENT

As of October 30, 1946, the Vietnamese and French authorities were obliged by their modus vivendi agreement to:

- liberate all political prisoners, respect democratic liberties, such as freedom of press and organization, and terminate all hostile propaganda
- cease all acts of hostility

- establish mixed commissions to prepare a durable military arrangement for the south, and the conditions for economic cooperation in the north, including the restitution of French property to its owners

To what extent did the two sides meet their obligations? There is no indication that the modus vivendi agreement induced the government in Hanoi to liberate any of its prisoners. Actually, French intelligence later laid hands on a top secret Vietnamese

Modus vivendi = "an arrangement or agreement allowing conflicting parties to coexist peacefully, either indefinitely or until a final settlement is reached"

Page.95

circular, dated October 28, 1946, instructing municipal and provincial authorities to make a list of executed or imprisoned "reactionary traitors" and fabricate documents to prove that they had been killed trying to escape, or were in prison for collaborating with the Japanese or for counterfeiting.[107] The Vietnamese did not have to present any lists to the French, however, for French authorities only began to prepare demands for the release of prisoners on November 21, when the situation in the port city of Haiphong was on the brink of open warfare.[108]

Only a short time before the order to forge evidence was issued, the Vietnamese press started a campaign against French oppression in the south. They attacked the French for having arrested the well-known engineer Nguyen Ngoc Bich and for having executed five identified Vietnamese patriots. D'Argenlieu informed Paris that three of them had been mortally wounded trying to escape. The fourth had died in hospital from battle wounds. The fifth was not dead at all, but was under arrest in Saigon. D'Argenlieu asked Paris to use this information and preclude new attacks from Hanoi propaganda and "its extensions in France, which constitute the most important arm that the Vietnamese government counts on."[109]

The Vietnamese error of including on their list of executions the name of a man who was still alive furnished d'Argenlieu with a propaganda opportunity. Already before the return of Ho Chi Minh, he had liberated ten well-known political prisoners, including both the man believed dead and the engineer who had been identified in the Vietnamese press. Nine of the liberated prisoners were sent to the north, while Nguyen Ngoc Bich, no doubt because of his technical expertise, was taken to Paris so he could be kept away from "local influence." The high commissioner secured wide publicity for this gesture before the return of the Vietnamese president and used it in his talks with Ho at Cam Ranh Bay.[110] The 10 belonged to a group of 85, who were released before Ho's return from France. On October 31, another 150 were released, so altogether, Saigon released 235 political prisoners.[111]

See also Section Bernard B. Fall above on how the French were treated by the Americans under US president Franklin D. Roosevelt before Harry Truman became US president..

Longer biography

Vietnamese

Kỹ sư, bác sĩ Nguyễn Ngọc Bích sinh tại làng An Hội, tổng Bảo Hựu, huyện Bảo An, nay thuộc huyện Giồng Trôm, tỉnh Bến Tre. Ông là con của ông Nguyễn Ngọc Tương (1881-1951), Giáo Tông đạo Cao Đài Ban Chỉnh Đạo (Bến Tre), và bà Bùi thị Giàu.

Khi còn nhỏ, ông ở cùng với bố, sinh sống ở nhiều nơi như Cần Thơ, Hà Tiên, Cần Giuộc và chủ yếu học tại Cần Giuộc. Năm 1926, lúc 15 tuổi, ông lên Sài Gòn học và tốt nghiệp Tú tài với số điểm rất cao, được đi du học bên Pháp. Tại Pháp, ông lần lượt học và lấy bằng kỹ sư của Trường Bách khoa (École Polytechnique) tại Paris (ông vào vào năm 1931 và tốt nghiệp năm 1933) và sau đó của Trường Quốc Gia Cầu Cống (École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées) cũng tại Paris. Đây là 2 trường đại học tạo kỹ sư danh tiếng của nước Pháp, cũng như trên thế giới từ trước đến nay, nhất là trường Bách Khoa vì thi tuyển để vào rất khó và là một trường quân sự thuộc Bộ Quốc Phòng Pháp, sinh viên khi tốt nghiệp có cấp bực sĩ quan quân đội và vào thời đó phải làm việc cho chánh phủ (dân chánh hoặc quân đội) một số năm bắt buộc.

Sau khi tốt nghiệp trường kỹ sư Cầu Cống, ông về nước làm việc cho chính quyền bảo hộ, tại Sở Thủy lợi Sóc Trăng cho đến ngày Nhật đảo chính Pháp (09/3/1945). Ông tham gia Kháng chiến ở khu căn cứ Sóc Trăng và được cử làm Khu Bộ phó Khu 9 và Dân Biểu của Rạch Giá trong Quốc Hội đầu tiên (nhiệm kỳ 1945-1960) của Việt Nam Dân Chủ Cộng Hòa. Ông thực hiện việc phá nhiều cầu có tiếng là rất khó phá như cầu Cái Răng tại Cần thơ, cầu Nhu Gia tại Sóc Trăng, v.v. , chặn bước tiến quân Pháp của các Tướng Valluy và Nyo của tướng Leclerc.

Năm 1946, một toán quân đội Pháp bắt ông tại An Phú Đông gần Sài Gòn trong một nhà ông đang đợi người đến dẫn ông lên Đà Lạt dự Hội nghị Sơ bộ Việt Pháp (tháng 4 và tháng 5 năm 1946) để chuẩn bị cho Hội nghị Fontainebleau sẽ diễn ra ở Pháp (tháng 7 đến tháng 9 năm 1946). Bị tra tấn và mặc dù dấu tung tích, nhưng người Pháp vẫn nhận ra ông sau một thời gian. Tướng Boyer de Latour đưa ông ra Tòa án Tối cao xử tử hình với tội danh phản bội đất nước Pháp vì ông tốt nghiệp trường Bách Khoa nghĩa là ông là sĩ quan quân đội Pháp. Ông Hoàn Xuân Hãn, cũng tốt nghiệp trường Bách Khoa (ông vào trường năm 1930), viết một lá thư gởi cho những người cựu sinh viên trường Bách Khoa kêu gọi họ hiểu tình thương nước của ông Nguyễn Ngọc Bích và bảo vệ ông trong lúc khó khăn của ông. Các sĩ quan quân đội Pháp tại Việt Nam tốt nghiệp trường Bách Khoa, dựa trên ký kết Pháp-Việt ngày 9 tháng 3 năm 1946, ghi tên ông vào một danh sách trao đổi tù nhân và tổ chức cho ông bị đài qua Pháp.

Trở lại Pháp, ông sống cùng với bà Henriette Bùi Quang Chiêu, người nữ bác sĩ đầu tiên của Việt Nam, nhưng hai người không cưới nhau vì là họ hàng (má của ông, bà Bùi Thị Giàu, là chị em họ với ông Bùi Quang Chiêu là ba của bà Henriette Bùi). Thời gian đầu mới qua lại, ông mở tại Paris nhà xuất bản Minh Tân cùng với một số bạn để phổ biến về Việt Nam tác phẩm của người Việt trí thức giúp nâng cao trí thức người sống tại đất Việt. Các sách phát hành gồm chẳng hạn "Hán-Việt Tự Điển" và "Pháp-Việt Tự Điển" của Đào Duy Anh, "Danh từ khoa học Pháp-Việt", "Chinh Phụ ngăm bị khảo" và "La sơn Phu tử"của Hoàn Xuân Hãn, "Hiện tượng học và chủ nghĩa duy vật biện chứng" (Phénoménologie et matérialisme dialectique) của Trần Đức Thảo, "Danh tử Pháp Việt về thuật ngữ kỹ thuật trong y tế" của các bác sĩ Phạm Khắc Quản và Lê Khắc Thiền, v.v. Rồi ông theo học ngành y. Sau khi tốt nghiệp y khoa và nhận bằng bác sĩ, ông nghiên cứu về ung thư và dạy Vật Lý Y Học tại Trường Y Khoa Paris cho tới khi qua đời.

Năm 1954, ông cùng với một số người Viết tại Pháp có ý muốn mang lại cho đất nước một lối thoát khác ngoài chiến tranh. Đó là giúp nhau phát triển hai miền đất nước để đuổi kịp các nước láng giềng và tránh lệ thuộc vào ngoại bang : Bắc-Nam đàm phán rồi hợp tác kinh tế thương mại trong khi chờ đợi lúc điều kiện thuận lợi có đủ để hai bên hợp nhau thống nhứt nước nhà. Nhóm của ông có cho người sang Genève gặp ông Phan Văn Đồng. Ngoài ra ông được Georges Bidault, Bộ trưởng ngoại giao Pháp (đến 16/06/1954) mời đến

gặp và một giáo sư Mỹ từ Washington đến thăm. Nhưng lúc đó chánh sách của Mỹ là phải trừ bỏ Cộng Sản, và bên phía ông Phạm Văn Đồng thì chú ý đến việc bầu cử thống nhất đất nước dự tính sẽ xẩy ra vào năm 1956. Nhóm trí thức Việt Nam đó không muốn lộ mặt – hầu hết họ là chuyên viên được đào tạo và cư trú tại Pháp – và thường xuyên gặp nhau, đặc biệt là tại trụ sở của nhà xuất bản Minh Tân, cho nên có người gọi họ là nhóm Minh Tân. Logo của nhà xuất bản nầy là một chim bồ câu kẹp trong mỏ một nhánh cây ôliu (olivier), tượng trưng cho "Hòa Bình".

Năm 1961, ông Nguyễn Ngọc Bích đăng tên ra ứng cữ Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa chống ông Ngô Đình Diệm đang nhiệm Tổng Thống, với ông Nguyễn Văn Thoại, giáo sư tại Collège de France, một cơ sở giáo dục và nghiên cứu lớn của Pháp được thành lập bởi vua François Ier vào năm 1530. Nhưng hồ sơ của ông bị chánh phủ Ngô Đình Diệm bát bỏ vì "vấn đề kỹ thuật".

Bị bịnh ung thư tại cuốn họng, ông về Việt Nam năm 1966 khi rất nặng và mất tại Sài gòn ngày 4 tháng 12 năm 1966. Ông được chôn tại Bến Tre, gần mộ của cha là Giáo Tông Nguyễn Ngọc Tương và anh em, trong đó có người em là liệt sĩ Nguyễn Ngọc Nhựt từng là Ủy viên Ủy Ban Kháng Chiến Hành Chánh Nam Bộ. Nhưng mộ nầy tróng, vì cốt Ông Nhựt đã được chánh phủ dời vào một nghỉa địa anh hùng liệt sĩ tại Bến Tre.

Nguồn: Nguyen Ngoc Chau (2018), *Le Temps des Ancêtres: Une famille vietnamienne dans sa traversée du XXe siècle*, L'Harmattan, Paris, France. [2]

English

Early life and education

Engineer and doctor Nguyen Ngoc Bich was born in An Hoi village, Bao Huu canton, Bao An district, now in Giong Mong district, Ben Tre province. He was the son of Mr. Nguyen Ngoc Tuong (1881-1951), Cao Dai Ban Chinh Dao (Ben Tre), and Ms. Bui Thi Giau.

As a child, he stayed with his father, lived in many places such as Can Tho, Ha Tien, Can Giuoc and mainly studied in Can Giuoc. In 1926, at the age of 15, he went to Saigon to study and graduated with a Baccalaureat at Chasseloup Laubat French School with very high scores, studying abroad in France. In France, he studied and obtained engineering degrees from the École Polytechnique in Paris (he entered in 1931 and graduated in 1933) and later from the École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées also in Paris. These are 2 prestigious engineering universities in France, as well as in the world so far, especially Polytechnique because the entrance exam is very difficult and is a military school under the tutelage of the French Ministry of the Army, students when graduating have the rank of a military officer and at that time had to work for the government (civil or military) for a period of time.

Figure 1. Student at Ecole Polytechnique (1931-1932)

Resistance fighter and prison time

After graduating from the École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, a civil engineering school, he returned home to work as a civil engineer for the colonial government at the Soc Trang Irrigation Department until the Japanese coup d'état in Viet Nam (09/03/1945). He joined the Resistance in the Soc Trang base area and was appointed deputy of the 9th Zone and a Member of Parliament for Rach Gia in the first National Assembly (term 1945-1960) of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. He destroyed many bridges that were notoriously difficult to break such as Cai Rang Bridge in Can Tho [1], Nhu Gia Bridge in Soc Trang, etc., blocking the French advance of General Leclerc's Generals Valluy and Nyo.

In 1946, a French army patrol arrested him in An Phu Dong near Saigon in a house where he was waiting for a guide to escort him to Da Lat for the Viet Nam-France Preliminary Conference (April and May 1946) [2] in preparation for the Fontainebleau Conference to take place in France (July to September 1946). He was tortured but still hid his real name and profession, until a French colonel who was inspecting the area where

he was captured, hearing that he seemed to be more than just a teacher, revealed to him that he graduated from Polytechnique and was looking for a man named Nguyen Ngoc Bich who graduated from the same school. That colonel took him back to be locked up in Saigon, less dangerous. He was sentenced to death by the Military Court because he graduated from École Polytechnique and was a French army officer. Hoang Xuan Han, minister of education and fine arts in Tran Trong Kim's cabinet (17-04-1945), also a graduate of Polytechnique (he entered in 1930), wrote a letter [3] to the alumni of this engineering school urging them to understand Nguyen Ngoc Bich's patriotism and help him in his difficult times. French military officers in Vietnam graduated from Polytechnique, based on the Franco-Vietnamese agreement of March 9, 1946, to put Nguyen Ngoc Bich's name on a prisoner exchange list and organize his exile in France [3].

Life in exile in France

Back in France, he lived with Dr Henriette Bui Quang Chieu, Vietnam's first female doctor, but the two did not marry because they were relatives (his mother, Bui Thi Giau, was a cousin of Bui Quang Chieu, Henriette Bui's father). Back in France, he founded in Paris Minh Tan [4] publishing house ((agents in Vietnam were the two bookstores Truong Thi (Hanoi) and Bich Van Thu Xa (Saigon)) with some friends to publish works of Vietnamese intellectuals to help improve people's knowledge living in Vietnam.

Published books include such as Dao Duy Anh's "*Hán-Việt Tự Điển*" (Chinese-Vietnamese dictionary) and "*Pháp-Việt Tự Điển*" (French-Vietnamese dictionary), "*French-Vietnamese* Scientific *Nouns*", Hoang Xuan Han's "*Danh từ khoa học Pháp-Việt*" (Scientific vocabulary French-Vietnamese), "*Chinh Phụ ngăm bị khảo*" and "*La sơn Phu tử*", Tran Duc Thao's "*Phénoménologie et matérialisme dialectique"* (Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism), doctors Pham Khac Quan and Le Khac Thien's "*Danh tử Pháp Việt về thuật ngữ kỹ thuật trong y tế*" (French Vietnamese vocabulary on technical terminology in medicine), etc. After graduating from medicine and receiving a doctor's degree, he studied cancer and taught Medical Physics at the Paris Medical School until his death. After he finished composing his Agrégation thesis ("agrégation" (translated into Thạc Sĩ in Vietnamese) is a degree higher than PHD), he could not take the exam because foreigners who want to be enrolled in the exam, must provide a letter of recommendation from their Embassy, at that time the Embassy of the State of Viet Nam with which he refused to have any link. During the French colonial period, French citizenship was given with parsimony to the ones who rendered great service to France and who applied for it. He did not render any service to France, he just had to work as a civil engineer for the colonial government, which was mandatory because he graduated from Ecole Polytechnique.

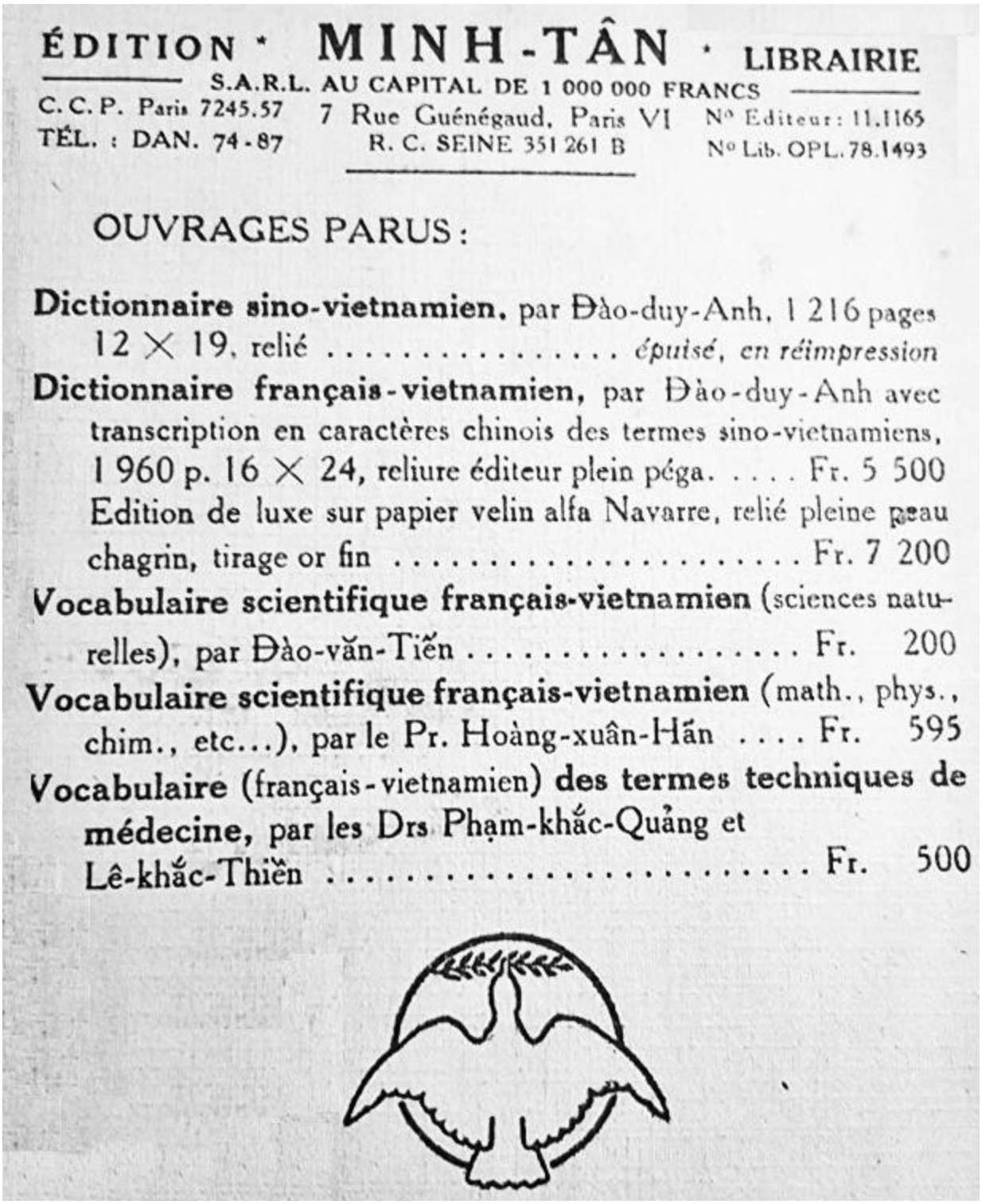

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Figure 2. Publishing house Minh Tân in Paris

Engagement in politics in South Vietnam

In 1954, before Diem was selected by Bao Dai, according to the books "*Our Vietnam: The War 1954-1975*" by Arthur John Langgut [5] and "*The Lost Crusade – America in Vietnam*" by Chester L. Cooper [6], he was widely regarded as a possible prime minister of the State of Vietnam.

Along with some Vietnamese in France, he wanted to give the country another way than the one of war: cooperation between North and South that help each other develop to catch up with neighbouring countries

and avoid dependence on foreign states: negotiations and economic and trade cooperation while waiting for favourable conditions for the two sides to unite the country. That idea was echoed by him in an article he wrote in the quarterly magazine China Quarterly, March 3-5, 1962. Later, the same idea was proposed by Ho Chi Minh [7] (in 1958 and 1962) and Ngo Dinh Diem and Ngo Dinh Nhu [8] (in 1963) but without success. A member of his group went to Geneva (Geneva Conference in 1954) to meet Phan Van Dong. He was invited by Georges Bidault, French Foreign Minister (until June 16, 1954) to meet and an American professor from Washington came to Paris to see him. But at that time the U.S. policy was to eliminate communism, and Pham Van Dong's side paid attention to the planned reunification elections in 1956. That group of Vietnamese intellectuals—most of whom were professionals trained and residing in France—kept to be discreet at that time and often met at the headquarters of Minh Tan publishing house, which made them called by some the Minh Tan group. The publisher's logo is a pigeon sandwiched in the beak of an olive branch, symbolizing "Peace".

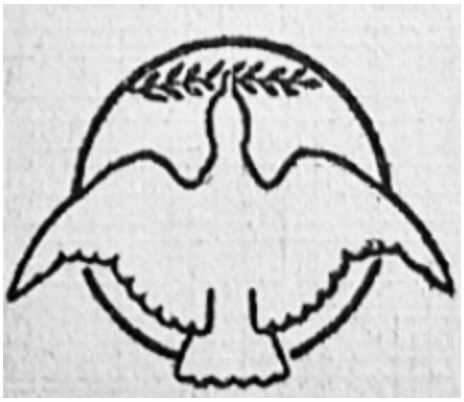

Figure 2b. Minh Tan's logo is a dove carrying an olive branch, symbolizing "Peace".

Figure 3. The French military interrogation in 1946 left a mark on his forehand (family photo 1964).

He sent his candidacy for the 1961 South Viet Nam presidential election, with his partner Nguyễn Văn Thoại [9], a professor at Collège de France in Paris and a former minister of Ngô Đình Diệm. But his file was dismissed by the Ngo Dinh Diem government because of "technical problems".

Cancer and end of life, return to Vietnam

Suffering from throat cancer, he returned to Vietnam in 1966 when he was very severe and died in Thu Duc on December 4, 1966. He was buried in Ben Tre, near the grave of his father Nguyen Ngoc Tuong and his brothers, including his brother martyr Nguyen Ngoc Nhut [10], who was a member of the Southern Administrative Resistance Committee. But the grave is open because Nhut's remains have been moved by the government to a martyr's graveyard in Ben Tre.

References

[1] A street in Can Tho is named Nguyen Ngoc Bich to commemorate him blowing up the Cai Rang bridge in this city to stop the French troops advance in 1945-46.

[2] As recorded in the two books "*Đêm trắng của Đức Giáo Tông*" (Sleepless Night of the Đức Giáo Tông) by Tram Huong, People's Police Publishing House, 2003 and "*Dũng khí Nguyễn Ngọc Nhựt*" (Heroic Nguyen Ngoc Nhut) by Nguyen Hung, in the series "Nam bộ nhân vật chí" (History of notable personalities in South Vietnam), published by Nhà Xuất bản Trẻ, HCMC, 2003. Chester L. Cooper in the book "*The lost Crusade : America in Vietnam*" wrote (pages 122-123) that he was ordered to go North.

[3] See the book "*Le Temps des Ancêtres - Une famille vietnamienne dans sa traversée du XXe siècle*" (The Ancestral Time - A Vietnamese Family on its Journey through the 20th Century) with "Preface" by historian Pierre Brocheux, author Nguyen Ngoc Chau, publishing house L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2018.

[4] See the book "*Viet Nam – Political history of the two wars- Independence war (1858-1954) and ideological war (1945-1975)*", Nguyễn Ngọc Châu, Nombre 7 publishing house, Nîmes, France, 2023

[5] Page 84

[6] Page 122-123

[7] In his speech at the twelfth anniversary of independence on September 2, 1957, Ho Chi Minh emphasized the consolidation and development of the economy in order to enhance the people's destiny. Regarding the South, he spoke of patience to reunify the country peacefully through general elections and advocated meetings and negotiations with the South, a position he reiterated on February 7, 1958 in New Delhi. On March 7, 1958, Pham Van Dong sent a letter to Ngo Dinh Diem, requesting meetings to reduce the army on each side and establish trade relations, the first steps towards future unification. The South Vietnamese government, learning from past communist actions against the nationalists (1945-46), did not believe in this outstretched hand.

According to My documents (FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume IV, Vietnam, August-December 1963, D151) « In March 1962, Mr. Ho Chi Minh said, in an interview with journalist Wilfred Burchett, the his concern for a peaceful resolution of the Vietnam issue [... and] in September [of the same year], the Indian President of the ICC (International Control).

[8] According to American documents (FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume IV, Vietnam, August-December 1963, D151) « In March 1962, Ho Chi Minh said, in an interview with journalist Wilfred Burchett, his concern for a peaceful resolution of the Vietnam issue [... and] in September [of the same year], the Indian President of the ICC (International Control Commission) reported that Ho Chi Minh had said that he was prepared to extend a hand of friendship to Ngo Dinh Diem ("a patriotic "), and the North and the South can initiate some steps towards a modus vivendi, including the exchange of members of divided families ».

[9] Nguyen Van Thoai comes from a famous Catholic family in the South. His brother, Nguyen Van At, married Ngo Dinh Thi Hiep, one of Ngo Dinh Diem's two sisters, and their son was later Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan, the co-vice archbishop of Saigon. . Nguyen Ngoc Bich is the son of one of the founders of Cao Dai (three million followers).

[10] “Dũng khí Nguyễn Ngọc Nhựt” (The Courageous Nguyen Ngoc Nhut)” by Nguyen Hung, in the series “Nam bộ nhân vật chí” (History of notable personalities in South Vietnam) published by Nhà Xuất Bàn Trẻ, Ho Chi Minh City, 2003. Nhut’s name was given to a street in Ho Chi Minh City and Ben Tre city.

French

TO ADD.

Peaceful negotiation, an independent viewpoint

Vietnam-War casualties

How many people died in the Vietnam War? | Britannica (accessed on 2023.02.18)
Written and fact-checked by The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica

In 1995 Vietnam released its official estimate of the number of people killed during the Vietnam War: as many as 2,000,000 civilians on both sides and some 1,100,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong fighters. The U.S. military has estimated that between 200,000 and 250,000 South Vietnamese soldiers died. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., lists more than 58,300 names of members of the U.S. armed forces who were killed or went missing in action. Among other countries that fought for South Vietnam, South Korea had more than 4,000 dead, Thailand about 350, Australia more than 500, and New Zealand some three dozen.

The China Quarterly, Vol. 9, Mar 1962

The China Quarterly | Cambridge Core

The China Quarterly is the leading scholarly journal in its field, covering all aspects of contemporary China including Taiwan. Its interdisciplinary approach covers a range of subjects including anthropology/sociology, literature and the arts, business/economics, geography, history, international affairs, law, and politics. Edited to rigorous standards by scholars of the highest repute, the journal publishes high-quality, authoritative research. International in scholarship, *The China Quarterly* provides readers with historical perspectives, in-depth analyses, and a deeper understanding of China and Chinese culture. In addition to major articles and research reports, each issue contains a comprehensive Book Review section.

The China Quarterly: Volume 9 - | Cambridge Core (Mar 1962)

Contributors

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Vietnam—An Independent Viewpoint

Vietnam—An Independent Viewpoint | The China Quarterly | Cambridge Core
The China Quarterly , Volume 9 , March 1962 , pp. 105 - 111
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S030574100002525X

Summary of main points

In 1962, Dr. Bich laid out an argument to avoid the subversion war by North Vietnam to conquer rice from South Vietnam to solve its famine problem due to low yields in agricultural production using archaic methods and due to the failed agrarian reform. His main points were (1) South Vietnam should have a truly liberal democratic government, (2) the South should establish commercial relations with the North to help solve the said famine problem, (3) the South should maintain a non-aligned neutrality that would prevent interference from the North, (4) the South would peacefully negotiate with the North toward a progressive reunification. Below is a more detailed summary of his article, looking back from more than 60 years later. As a result, past tense is used in this summary to describe long-past events, instead of the sometimes present tense used in the original article.

Contrary to the belief of the Western world (that the Vietnamese generally disliked, and had an inferiority complex against, the Chinese), the Vietnamese tended to be too proud of their history and victories against the Chinese and Mongol invaders over the centuries.

Aware of the Chinese historical "fierce expansionism," an important question for North and South Vietnam was how to safeguard the future of Vietnam as a whole country.

While South Vietnam tried to forcibly assimilate Chinese immigrants and their descendants, North Vietnam adopted a "more subtle attitude", moving from "fears" during the Chiang Kai-shek era to "solidarity and friendship" after the communist had won in 1949.

The Geneva agreements, while satisfying for China, left the North Vietnamese to be content with the prospect of reunifying with South Vietnam upon an election. After the failure of the agrarian reform, there was a concern of the presence of many Chinese soldiers and civilians in North Vietnam. To keep Chinese economic aid flowing, Ho Chi Minh initially maintained a balance between Peking (Beijing) and Moscow, but subsequently tilted toward Moscow after Peking admitted that it could not help carry out a semi-heavy industrialization. In September 1960, Le Duan, then Secretary-General of the Party, put forward a three-point program: (1) Support Moscow in any Sino-Soviet dispute, (2) Five-year plan (1961-1965) to socialize North Vietnam, (3) Progressive and peaceful reunification of the two Vietnams.

With the nomination of Le Duan—who led the struggle for independence in South Vietnam for a long time and knew the South more than anyone else—as First Secretary of the Party, North Vietnam began to undertake the reconquest of the South, with the first step being to eliminate the Ngo Dinh Diem regime and the American influence in the South. There were deeper motives.

"The most striking feature of the Vietnamese Communist leadership was its outstanding spirit of realism, even pragmatism." They continuously and critically reexamined facts so that a lesson could be drawn for every action and every happening to avoid past mistakes. By doing so, they tended to imitate or to repeat past actions that were proven successful, and lacked imagination and open-mindedness to create new solutions to tackle new challenges.

For example, they stopped following the advice of Chinese tacticians in launching large-scale mass attacks once many of their soldiers died by French napalm bombs. They switched from the costlier manufacturing

of arms to the less expensive manufacturing of hand grenades, which can be used against light battalions to seize their arms. They bred dogs, instead of pigs, as a source of meat since dogs produced two litters of young each year, while pigs produced only one.

A deeper motive to swing closer to Moscow was to develop a rapid industrialization to raise the standard of living to avoid complaints about dictatorship and restriction of freedom, and also the "dreaded spectre of becoming a mere satellite state".

The targets of the Five-Year Plan were "extremely optimistic". In the old French Indochina, "great leaps forward" in economics were achieved in some sectors, such as a 400% increase in plantation area, 150% increase in the number of workers in industrial establishments, in spite of World War I. Now, there was an abundance of labor due to high unemployment. The planned industrial projects could be completed if foreign aid maintained the same rhythm and agricultural production was adequate.

It was doubtful, however, that the target of growing agricultural production by 61% over five years could be achieved due to low yields resulting from the archaic methods of cultivation, the old system of sub-letting land, the difficulty of cultivating new land, the discontent among the peasants, and the disastrous agrarian reforms and its consequence. Hunger had become endemic, and China could not come to the rescue because of her own problems. Rice had to be smuggled from the South to the North.

The five-year plan ran a "grave risk of failure" due to lack of food to feed the people in North Vietnam, without an increase in rice supply from South Vietnam, not to mention other unpredictable factors such as floods, droughts, bad weather, etc.

The success of the Five-Year Plan would be a primary condition to maintain some independence from Peking, which would exert a greater influence than from Moscow in the case of "necessary and inevitable war," and the North being a satellite of China "would constitute a most serious menace for the South, particularly in time of any major crisis."

The reconquest of the South entrusted to Le Duan could then be understood as "a struggle unleashed simply for the purpose of conquering rice", without which the five-year plan most certainly would fail. For many Southerners, their reaction against the Diem regime, rather than the love for Communism, enabled this subversion war to continue. The enormous economic benefit that North Vietnam would harvest from the national reunification was the primary reason for the war.

North Vietnam was fighting to secure rice, and thus the war was, from the purely national point of view, a legitimate one. Ngo Dinh Diem on the other hand refused to provide aid to alleviate the famine in the North.

The Vietnamese people had for a long time a desire to have a liberal, truly democratic government. and had proven that in the end they would rise time and again to thwart the yoke imposed on them by any foreign power.

To avoid such internal war for rice from becoming a proxy war for Moscow, there should be a liberal regime in Saigon that allowed for establishing commercial relations with Hanoi and for a call to stop the fighting. Moreover, a non-aligned political neutrality would prevent interference by North Vietnam in the affairs of South Vietnam.

A peaceful and progressive reunification of the two Vietnams could only be achieved through negotiation at a table, and not by arm struggle in the jungle. The South would hope to live side by side peacefully with the

North to collaborate in building the common Vietnamese nation, as the alternative would make "reunification" a propaganda that concealed the desire to conquer.

Pierre Asselin

Asselin, Pierre (2013), *Hanoi's Road to War, 1954-1965*, University of California Press, California.

[In early 1962, Hanoi was pursuing the neutralization of South Vietnam, similar to the neutralization of Laos, once the latter was successful. But] mounting American support for the regime in Saigon, the collapse of the accords on Laos within weeks after their signing, and the outcome of the Cuban crisis convinced many party members that neutralization of the South and any diplomatic solution to the situation there would not work. [Asselin (2013), p.118]

Lien-Hang T. Nguyen

Nguyen, Lien-Hanh T. (2012), *Hanoi's War*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

[Around the same time,] the peace faction of the Party had never approved of promoting armed conflict in the South. Instead, these midlevel "North-first" officials sought to promote the socialist revolution in the DRV that could compete, and ultimately defeat, the RVN economically and politically [no war]. As such, they called for an immediate end to the war through the neutralization of South Vietnam. Their calls, however, were drowned out as Le Duan marched a greater number of northern troops to the southern battlefield. [Nguyen (2012), p.49]

On 29 August 1963, French president Charles de Gaulle called for the "neutralization" of Vietnam along the same model as the Laotian settlement.52 Although aimed at forcing the Americans to withdraw and allowing the Vietnamese to settle their own affairs… When the Ngo brothers, particularly Diem's brother Nhu, expressed interest in this scheme and initiated talks with the NLF as a means to corner the Americans, who had grown more critical of their administration, they not only signed their own death warrants, but they also may have increased Le Duan's anxiety that the pro-Soviet "North-first" moderates' desired peaceful reunification was a real possibility. [Nguyen (2012) p.62.]

Viet Nam—Un point de vue indépendant

Traduction de l'article de NGUYEN NGOC Bich dans China Quarterly n°9, January-March 1962 [2]

Viet Nam—Un point de vue indépendant
par NGUYEN NGOC BICH

Le Dr Bich, qui vit maintenant en exil, est l'un des principaux représentants d'une partie importante de l'opinion vietnamienne qui se trouve en désaccord avec les actions des communistes de la RDV [République Démocratique du Vietnam (du Nord)] *et du gouvernement de Ngo Dinh Diem au Sud-Vietnam.*

Une croyance largement répandue dans le monde occidental, écrit-il dans son article, est que les Vietnamiens en général n'aiment pas les Chinois, envers lesquels ils ont un sentiment d'infériorité provenant de la domination du Việt Nam pendant plus de mille ans par leur puissant voisin du nord.

La vérité est qu'un tel complexe d'infériorité a cessé d'exister de nos jours, s'il avait vraiment existé dans le passé, pour la simple raison que le Việt Nam avait établi son indépendance vis-à-vis de la Chine au Xe siècle et l'avait défendue contre de nombreuses, terribles et coûteuses attaques – par les Song au XI^{è} siècle, les Mongols de Gengis Khan au XIIIe siècle, les Ming au début du XVe siècle, et finalement les Qing au XVIIIe siècle.

Au contraire, les Vietnamiens avaient tendance à éprouver un peu trop de fierté dans leur histoire, qui englobe, à côté de la résistance vigoureuse contre les attaques chinoises, une expansion territoriale continue vers le sud vers le delta du Mékong, et, plus récemment, après quatre-vingts années de contact avec l'Occident, la grande victoire de Dien Bien Phu. Cependant, cette fierté ne les empêche pas d'avoir constamment conscience du fait que presque sept cent millions de Chinois vivent de l'autre côté de la frontière. De plus, ils savent bien qu'à travers les siècles tous les régimes chinois qui avaient périodiquement unifié ce grand pays avaient montré leur farouche volonté expansionniste au détriment de ses voisins. Qu'on veuille bien l'admettre ou pas, la plus grande question qui se pose aujourd'hui tant pour le Nord que pour le Sud Vietnam est la façon de protéger dès maintenant le futur de toute la nation vietnamienne, menacée par une si importante population et par un si grand dynamisme.

Au Sud Vietnam, le régime de Saigon semble poursuivre une politique interne d'assimilation forcée des Chinois immigrants et de leurs descendants, et une politique étrangère ignorant complètement l'existence de la Chine continentale.

Au Nord Vietnam, le gouvernement de Ha Noi, qui est lié à la Chine par une idéologie politique commune et qui est géographiquement plus proche d'elle, semble avoir adopté une attitude plus subtile. Les craintes de la Chine, qui avaient été à plusieurs reprises exprimées en public durant l'époque de Chiang Kai Shek, avaient donné lieu depuis 1949 à des manifestations de solidarité et d'amitié [entre les deux pays]. Ni l'idéologie commune ni les sommes énormes d'aide reçues de la Chine ne peuvent totalement expliquer cela. Seule la géopolitique, qui en elle-même implique une certaine communauté d'intérêt, peut offrir une explication complète et satisfaisante. En fait, la présence des troupes françaises dans le delta du fleuve Rouge constituait une menace que la nouvelle Chine unifiée ne pouvait tolérer longtemps. Effectivement, elle ne l'avait pas toléré longtemps, car ces troupes furent retirées après la bataille de Dien Bien Phu.

Mais les accords de Genève, qui satisfaisaient une Chine anxieuse de conserver ses énergies, laissèrent les Vietnamiens sur leur faim. Ils étaient obligés d'accepter de faire bon cœur contre mauvaise fortune et d'accepter la paix, mais seulement à la condition de se voir offrir la perspective d'une réunification avec le Sud Vietnam, pacifiquement si possible, sinon par la subversion. Ce n'était pas avant les vagues de

mécontentement rural causées par les campagnes de “dénonciation de la misère” et l’échec des réformes agraires, que la question posée par la présence de tant de soldats et civils chinois dans le pays avait été soulevée. À cette époque, le pro-Chinois Truong Chinh n’était plus secrétaire général du parti Lao Dong. Le chant de cygne de la période chinoise était, peut-être, la campagne des Cent Fleurs. Elle conduisit à une période de prudente transition durant laquelle un équilibre était maintenu entre Pékin et Moscou par Ho Chi Minh lui-même, car il n’avait pas hésité à reprendre la direction du parti après le départ de Truong Chinh. L’aide économique chinoise pouvait être encore prépondérante à l’époque, parce que la tâche à laquelle était confronté le gouvernement était celle de remettre l’économie nationale sur pied et d’installer des petites industries de biens de consommation. Cependant, le jour où la Chine confessa elle-même être incapable de réaliser, par exemple, un rapide programme d’industrialisation semi-lourde, un virage vers Moscou devint inévitable. Ce fut le troisième Congrès du parti Lao Dong, à Ha Noi, en septembre 1960, qui accomplit la grande transition et en particulier le programme esquissé par Lê Duan, nommé secrétaire général du parti durant le Congrès, qui proposa les trois thèmes principaux suivants :

- Support du point de vue russe dans la querelle sino-soviétique.
- Socialisation rapide du Nord Vietnam, par l’exécution du premier Plan quinquennal (1961-1965).
- Réunification progressive et pacifique des deux parties du Việt Nam.

Lê Duan est probablement le dirigeant nord-vietnamien qui a la meilleure connaissance du Sud Vietnam, car, après le départ de Nguyen Son, il y dirigeait lui-même le combat pour l’indépendance pendant une longue période. Sa nomination au poste de Premier secrétaire du parti – il n’y a pas de doute qu’il soit nommé, juste comme Truong Chinh l’avait été dix ans auparavant, car la source de toute autorité est Ho Chi Minh, et cela l’avait toujours été indiqué que les Vietnamiens communistes ont décidé que le moment est venu pour le Nord d’entreprendre la reconquête du Sud et d’accomplir cela à partir de l’intérieur du Sud Vietnam. Elle symbolise l’intention d’exercer un grand effort sur le domaine beaucoup mieux connu de Lê Duan, nommément le Sud Vietnam, que sur les domaines de la polémique idéologique avec Mao Tse Tung ou de l’établissement d’usines de machines-outils dans la banlieue de Ha Noi. L’objectif final est la réunification des deux parties du Việt Nam, et la première étape sera l’élimination du régime de Ngo Dinh Diem, ainsi que de toute influence américaine sur le Sud Vietnam. Cependant, il y a des raisons de penser que des motifs plus profonds existent, qui sont liés de près au deux premiers thèmes développés au Congrès du parti Lao Dong. Il est essentiel de comprendre ces motifs.

La caractéristique la plus frappante de la direction communiste vietnamienne est son remarquable esprit de réalisme, voire son pragmatisme. Bien qu’elle soit attachée à la doctrine communiste, généralement parlant, elle n’acceptera pas simplement des idées préconçues. Pour beaucoup de Vietnamiens communistes, la pratique du marxisme comprend rien de plus qu’un examen et une évaluation continuelles des faits. Tout ce qui arrive et toute action doivent faire l’objet d’une réflexion critique, d’où une leçon doit être tirée. Le but de cette réflexion est plus d’éviter la répétition des fautes passées que de produire un guide sûr des futures actions. Cependant, cette pratique débouche assez souvent sur un manque d’imagination dans le planning des futures actions, car on est volontiers plus enclin à répéter les actions passées, quand elles ont été considérées comme fructueuses, au lieu de faire face à une nouvelle situation avec un esprit totalement ouvert et de dresser des plans pour cette situation spécifique. C’est pourquoi l’on avait souvent reproché aux Vietnamiens communistes, bien que parfois injustement, d’être naturellement plus enclins à imiter ou à répéter qu’à créer quelque chose de nouveau par eux-mêmes.

D’abondants exemples de cette façon de penser et d’agir existent. Comme celui de la bataille de Vinh Yen quand, sur le conseil des tacticiens chinois, qui étaient habitués à disposer d’un nombre important de troupes, le Viet Minh décida de lancer des attaques massives. Le général de Lattre de Tassigny put ainsi utiliser du napalm à grande échelle, entraînant des effets dévastateurs sur les soldats vietnamiens. Cependant, à partir de

ce moment et jusqu'à la fin de la guerre, de telles attaques de masse ne furent plus répétées. Aussi, la fabrication des armes fut ralentie à une certaine période et remplacée par la fabrication des grenades offensives à main. La raison de ce changement était que quelqu'un avait fait remarquer qu'il était plus "économique" de monter des attaques à la grenade contre de légers bataillons ennemis et de prendre leurs armes que de fabriquer celles-ci, fabrication occupant une main-d'œuvre importante et occasionnant des difficultés de transport dans les régions à l'arrière. Dans un autre domaine, le Viet Minh un jour découragea l'élevage des cochons tant que durerait la guerre, et il encouragea de celui des chiens comme source de viande, car les chiens sont plus "économiques". Les chiens sont aussi gourmands et omnivores que les cochons, sinon plus, mais quelqu'un avait remarqué que les chiens produisent deux portées de petits chaque année, alors que les cochons n'en produisent qu'une.

Le pragmatisme tend à tirer les dirigeants du Nord Vietnam hors du dogmatisme et fait rendre les thèses de Moscou plus acceptables pour eux que celles de Pékin. Il les amène à la conclusion qu'une rapide industrialisation du pays, qui permettra d'élever le niveau de vie, peut probablement justifier aux yeux du peuple la dictature et toutes les contraintes imposées par le Parti. En conséquence, toute autre chose doit être subordonnée à cette rapide industrialisation du pays, parce que la croissance du pouvoir et du prestige du pays, qui sera inévitablement engrangée comme le résultat de la nouvelle industrie, enlèvera plus sûrement qu'autre chose le spectre redouté de devenir un simple état satellite.

Jusqu'à quel degré une telle industrialisation peut-elle être achevée rapidement ? Au premier coup d'œil, les objectifs qui ont été énoncés avec force détails dans le plan quinquennal apparaissent extrêmement optimistes. Mais on doit se rappeler que la vieille Indochine française avait elle-même accompli parfois de "grands bonds en avant" dans certains secteurs de l'économie. La surface consacrée aux plantations d'hévéas passa de 3.000 hectares à 12.000 hectares entre 1924 et 1929, une augmentation de 400 pour cent en l'espace de cinq ans. De même, entre 1914 et 1929, le nombre de travailleurs dans les établissements industriels grimpa de 55.000 à 140.000, ce qui représentait une augmentation totale de 150 pour cent, ou une croissance moyenne annuelle de 17 pour cent, et cela malgré la Première Guerre mondiale, qui occupa quatre années de cette période. À la date d'aujourd'hui, le Nord Vietnam dispose d'abondantes ressources humaines, car le chômage est élevé, en particulier dans la campagne, et la densité de la population dans le delta du fleuve Rouge est parmi les plus élevées du monde. Les deux hauts fourneaux, la cimenterie, la fabrique de machines-outils, l'usine des tracteurs, et les autres projets inscrits dans le plan peuvent être facilement complétés dans le temps spécifié, à condition que le rythme actuel d'aide étrangère soit maintenu et que la production agricole soit adéquate. Mais le seront-ils ?

La croissance envisagée dans la production agricole, 61 pour cent en cinq ans, apparaît modeste en comparaison de celle proposée pour l'industrie, mais il y a de bonnes raisons de penser qu'elle ne sera pas atteinte. Il y a plusieurs motifs, le plus important étant les rendements bas dus aux méthodes encore archaïques de culture, mais aussi le produit du vieux système de sous-location des terres, la difficulté d'avoir de nouvelles terres dans les régions cultivées, le mécontentement général des paysans, et la désastreuse réforme agraire et ses conséquences. La forte progressivité dans l'échelle glissante des taxes sur la production des grains décourage les fermiers, ainsi que les désagréments du système de contrôle multiple imposé par une bureaucratie à structure dirigeante trop lourde et une police trop nombreuse. La production agricole de 1960 était plus d'un million de tonnes au-dessous des chiffres estimés, et les produits agricoles secondaires ne pouvaient pas toujours compenser le déficit en céréales. La famine est devenue endémique, et il est très improbable que la Chine, qui a vécu elle-même trois années successives de mauvaises récoltes, puisse venir à la rescousse de son voisin du sud, en particulier aujourd'hui. Il ne reste que la contrebande de riz du Sud Vietnam, qui est estimée à 400.000 tonnes par an, bien qu'on se demande sur quelle base une telle estimation peut être faite.

Par conséquent, en analyse finale, le succès du plan quinquennal va dépendre du problème de l'alimentation de la population du Nord Vietnam, un problème qui ne peut pas être facilement résolu sans une augmentation de fourniture de riz du Sud Vietnam. En effet, le taux annuel de croissance de la production agricole, qui devrait atteindre 7 pour cent, ne sera en réalité probablement pas plus de 4 pour cent, alors que la population, si l'augmentation annuelle de celle-ci est approximativement la même que celle du Sud Vietnam aujourd'hui, augmentera de 3 pour cent. De plus, la collectivisation proposée de l'agriculture rend impossible de prévoir si un tel chiffre peut être atteint. Si l'on tient compte de tous les facteurs imprévisibles en agriculture, inondations, sécheresses, mauvais temps, etc., et qu'on y ajoute les spécificités propres au Nord Vietnam, le programme d'industrialisation, et la socialisation de l'agriculture, il semblerait que la République démocratique du Việt Nam risque d'être en grave risque d'échec en raison du manque de nourriture pour alimenter la population. La thèse que l'industrie doit avoir la priorité sur l'agriculture risque de se retrouver erronée dans la pratique, avec pour résultat que ceux qui l'ont préconisée seront discrédités.

En conséquence, les tenants d'une politique de "coexistence pacifique" avec l'Ouest – qui soutiennent aussi le présent programme économique – risquent de se voir réduits à une minorité par les partisans d'une "nécessaire et inévitable guerre". Quand cela arrivera, l'amitié avec la Russie sera nécessairement remplacée par une alliance avec la Chine. Le danger sera alors très grand que l'indépendance, relative mais néanmoins réelle, dont jouit la RDV aujourd'hui, disparaîtra et que la RDV deviendra un simple satellite de la Chine. Ainsi, le succès du Plan quinquennal apparaîtrait comme une condition première, non seulement pour maintenir la ligne actuelle du parti Lao Dong, mais aussi pour préserver dans une certaine mesure l'indépendance de tout le Việt Nam vis-à-vis de la Chine, car la "satellisation" du Nord constituerait la menace la plus sérieuse pour le Sud, en particulier en période de crise majeure.

La tâche confiée au nouveau secrétaire général du parti Lao Dong est d'assurer le succès de la ligne présente. Vue de cette façon, la guerre de subversion qui a déjà été déclarée clairement contre Ngo Dinh Diem et les USA pourrait être comprise comme un combat déclenché dans le but d'obtenir du riz. Les sentiments nationalistes exprimés sans cesse par la propagande du Nord, les appels sentimentaux à la réunification des deux moitiés de la nation – faits par des personnes qui, en raison de l'idéologie qu'ils ont adoptée, dénieraient le concept de nation – n'emportent aucune conviction. Ils ne soulèvent pas un très profond écho dans la population du Sud Vietnam, car les Sudistes sont en train de souffrir de cette guerre subversive à laquelle ils n'ont pas contribué. En fait, la subversion a été rendue possible plus comme réaction contre le régime Diem que par quelque amour du communisme ou parce qu'il y a une vision quelconque d'une unité nationale dans le futur. C'est à cause des énormes bénéfices économiques qui reviendront au Nord grâce à une réunification nationale que la RDV fait si vigoureusement campagne en sa faveur. Si ce n'était pas le cas, la RDV aurait adopté une attitude séparatiste analogue à celle de l'Allemagne de l'Est en Europe. Aucune dialectique, même marxiste, n'aurait pu soutenir une théorie en Europe et son exact contraire en Asie.

Cependant, c'est précisément parce que le Nord Vietnam combat pour se procurer du riz que la guerre, d'un point de vue purement national, est une guerre légitime. Pour des patriotes auto-proclamés comme Ngo Dinh Diem, qui sont motivés plus par leur haine du communisme que par une réelle compassion pour le sort de leurs compatriotes du Nord, il est absurde de refuser d'aider leurs compatriotes dans leur lutte contre la famine. En refusant leur aide à ce qui constitue, après tout, une partie de leur pays, ils affaiblissent nécessairement le pays tout entier et même les idéaux qu'ils proclament vouloir défendre. Ils ont aussi oublié l'histoire de la nation vietnamienne, qui a connu, même sous les Trinh et les Nguyen, des périodes de prospérité chaque fois que la rivalité entre ces deux familles a été reléguée à l'arrière-plan.

Tout ceci n'implique nullement que l'adhésion du Sud-Việt Nam au monde libre doive être remise en question ni ne suggère que, pour la raison déjà évoquée, il doive faire des concessions au communisme. Le peuple vietnamien a depuis si longtemps aspiré à une forme libérale et véritablement démocratique de

gouvernement et ils ont donné trop de preuves de leur attachement aux libertés individuelles pour que quelqu'un puisse maintenir pour un temps appréciable, même en employant la force brute, un joug que le peuple abhorre. Ils ne veulent pas plus du chef de district – qui les force, au nom d'un quelconque "isme", à travailler le jour sur les routes dans des équipes de travaux forcés – que du cadre qui, au nom d'un "isme" différent, les force à détruire la nuit ce qu'ils doivent réparer le lendemain. Ils exigent simplement qu'on ne les tourmente pas et qu'on les laisse en paix. Ils désirent que l'armée, qui est formée d'une partie de la population elle-même, les protège de toute violence d'où qu'elle vienne et impose à la campagne et dans les villes du Việt Nam le respect de la personne humaine et des lois du pays.

Mais, ceci étant dit, on doit affirmer que ce serait une grave erreur pour le Sud Vietnam de laisser perdurer indéfiniment cette guerre de subversion et de permettre ainsi au Nord Vietnam de transformer ce qui était au départ une guerre pour du riz en une guerre faite pour le compte de Moscou. L'introduction d'un régime libéral à Saigon pourrait assainir l'air, permettre d'établir des relations commerciales avec Ha Noi et d'instaurer une trêve dans les combats. Quant aux affaires étrangères, les exigences de neutralité interdiraient toute interférence de la RDV dans les affaires du Sud Vietnam, lequel serait souverain dans la décision de suivre une politique plus véritablement indépendante et nationale tout en maintenant de bonnes relations avec ses voisins et tous les pays du monde libre.

Une réunification pacifique et progressive du Việt Nam ne pourrait être réalisée que de manière pacifique et progressive, c'est-à-dire sans utilisation d'aucune force armée mais en réunissant les deux parties autour d'une table. Avant de mettre les armes de côté, il ne saurait être question de réunification pacifique. En attendant que cela arrive un jour futur, quand les circonstances le permettront, le Sud Vietnam espère que les deux moitiés pourront vivre en paix l'une à côté de l'autre, s'aider l'une l'autre dans la tâche commune de bâtir la nation vietnamienne, au lieu d'utiliser les armes l'une contre l'autre dans un combat idéologique dans lequel le peuple ne joue aucun rôle et qui persistera aussi longtemps que le monde restera divisé en deux blocs mutuellement hostiles. En agissant autrement, le concept de "réunification pacifique" deviendra seulement un thème de propagande destiné à dissimuler une volonté problématique de conquête.

Commemoration stela for Dr. Henriette Bui and Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Bich

On this stela, the dates and locations of birth and death of Dr. Bich were recorded. The right part of the stela for Dr. Bich was ordered and completed in 1967 (a year after Dr. Bich's death in 1966) by Dr. Henriette Bùi Quang Chiêu, who signed at the bottom as "Hiền thê" (Loving wife), and who lived together with Dr. Bich in the last few years of his life in Paris, but they were not officially and legally married; a fact confirmed in Henriette Bui Quang Chiêu — Wikipédia (wikipedia.org).

Han-Viet Tu Dien - Sino-Vietnamese Dictionary

Dr. Bich's open letter

Thơ công khai
gởi anh Đào Duy Anh
tác giả bộ Hán-Việt Từ-Điển.

Kính anh Đào,

Trong tình cảnh hiện tại của ta, tôi không biết chỗ ở của anh nơi nào để gởi thơ ngay, nên phải tạm dùng lối thơ công khai nầy mà nói chuyện với anh. Xét ra, đó là một việc lỗi. Sở dĩ tôi phải làm như vậy, là vì việc ích lợi chung của cả dân-tộc ép tôi phải vượt qua một ít tiểu tiết dung thường.

Vào khoảng tháng bảy 1949, nhiều bạn ở Paris đưa ra vấn đề làm sách giáo khoa và phổ thông bằng tiếng mẹ đẻ. Nhiều anh em, sau khi bàn cải châu đáo, thấy rằng rất có lợi mà giao cho một người gánh trọn trách-nhiệm về việc xuất bản, thì những bạn khác mới khỏi bận bịu lặt vặt, hầu có rồi rãnh mà nghĩ về phần sáng tác. Tất cả đều đồng ý mong mỏi cho tôi gánh cái trách nhiệm ấy. Sau mấy ngày lưỡng lự, tôi bằng lòng với cái nguyên tắc mà tôi đã tuyên bố trước mặt mọi anh em là: tôi làm việc không lấy tiền công lại không lấy một đồng lời nào cả; và được bao nhiêu, tôi sẽ dùng nhập vào vốn để bành trướng công việc.

Do theo đó mà nhà xuất bản Minh-Tân ra đời. Cái tên nầy cũng bày tỏ chương trình mà chúng tôi muốn dõi theo, ấy là làm cho dân ta được biết rõ những cái gì mới và hay nảy ra ở các nơi.

Khi khởi công, chúng tôi thấy nảy ra hai vấn đề quan hệ:

— 1) Những tác giả, mỗi khi gặp một ý niệm mới, mà muốn diễn tả tư tưởng của mình, thì nên dùng chữ gì?

Nếu mạnh ai nấy đặt tiếng mới, tuy điều nầy không phải là việc dễ, thì trong ngôn ngữ Việt Nam sẽ sanh ra lắm việc hổn độn. Ngoài ra những tiếng

đã lưu hành, mỗi tác giả sẽ đem tiếng riêng của mình, có phải làm phiền công chúng thêm chăng? Rồi độc giả sẽ dựa vào đâu để tìm nghĩa mỗi khi gặp một tiếng mới. Không lẽ mỗi quyển sách lại phải in thêm một phụ bản về từ khảo như hồi ba mươi năm về trước?

Bốt hơn là tất cả tác giả nên dùng một lối như nhau, tiếng nói rõ nghĩa tương đương đều được cả thảy công nhận. — 2/ Mỗi khi độc giả gặp chữ mới thì làm sao tìm ngay được ý nghĩa của tác giả bằng cách tự mình tra cứu?

Chỉ có một cách là làm sao mỗi người có một bộ từ điển mà chính tác giả đã dùng để suy ra chữ đó.

Xét ra, từ hơn mấy chục năm nay, chưa có bộ từ điển nào được không dùng hơn bộ Hán-Việt Từ-Điển của anh trong công việc quy định những tiếng mới ngày nay làm tiếng được lưu hành trong dân chúng cũng là nhờ bộ sách ấy.

Tôi xét nét nhiều lắm nên định cho in bộ sách của anh lại, hầu giúp cho tất cả tác giả dùng những tiếng được thống nhất và giúp cho độc giả tiện bề tra cứu.

Dù anh đã nhiều lần ngỏ ý, bộ sách này còn có thể sửa chữa nhiều để được hợp thời hơn. Nhưng rằng anh, chúng tôi không dám tự tiện chữa một dấu, một chữ; vì khi cho in ra, chúng tôi dùng lối chụp hình cho được tương thành với bản in đầu tiên. Tôi vẫn biết rằng làm việc này, phải xin phép và được giấy phép hẳn hoi của anh. Nhưng tôi nghĩ rằng khi anh viết sách, anh nghĩ đến tiện lợi của Việt ngữ hơn điều chi khác; và khi tôi cho in lại bộ Hán-Việt Từ-Điển, tôi cũng đồng những tư-tưởng ấy, thì tôi chắc chắn rằng anh

sẽ không từ chối mà để cho tôi làm công
việc này.

Mà sau Kia, dầu anh có cách cử
điệu chi, tôi xin chịu lãnh phần tội
thước với anh cả.

Vì tôi cho rằng lãnh phần tội này
chỉ là một phần hi sinh nhỏ của
tôi đối với tiền đồ cao viễn của toàn
thể quốc dân Việt-Nam mà thôi.

Tuy nhiên, bản quyền của anh, trong
công việc tái bản này, sẽ được hoàn toàn
đảm bảo. Ý anh muốn dùng nó cách
nào, tôi cũng chiều theo. Tôi viết bức thư
công khai này in liền mới quyển, là hy
vọng rằng thế nào cũng có một quyển
đến tay anh được. Và cũng là thỉnh
thoảng lãnh trách nhiệm của tôi đối
với anh vậy.

Mùa thu năm
Việt-Nam độc lập
thứ năm (1949)

Nguyễn-ngọc-Bích

Autumn, 5th year of independence of Vietnam (1949)

Errors in Vietnamese Wikipedia

Updated 2023.03.26 - Started 2023.03.25

The Vietnamese Wikipedia article Nguyễn Ngọc Bích (kỹ sư), 13:23, ngày 19 tháng 3 năm 2023 contained the following errors or omissions, which are corrected below.

Date and location of Dr. Bich's arrest and citizenship

It was written in Nguyễn Ngọc Bích (kỹ sư), 13:23, ngày 19 tháng 3 năm 2023 that:

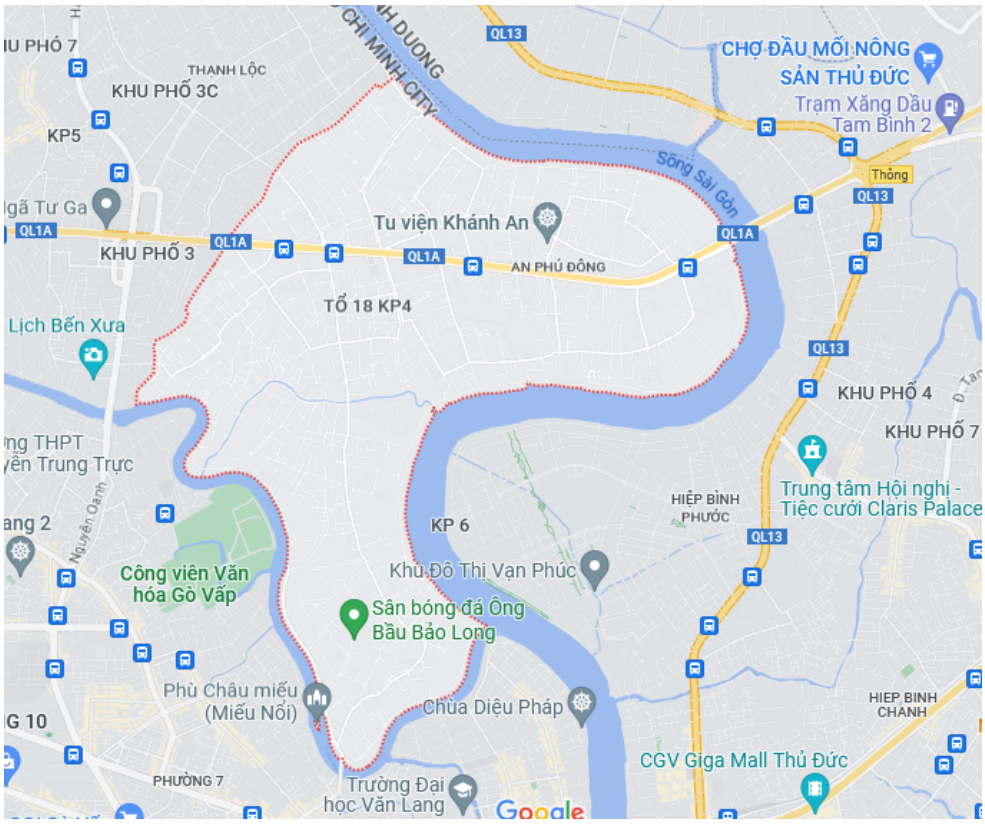
"Đầu năm 1947, trong một cuộc càn quét vùng kháng chiến ở Sóc Trăng, ông bị quân Pháp bắt làm tù binh. Sau một thời gian giấu tung tích, ông bị Pháp nhận diện là kỹ sư Nguyễn Ngọc Bích. Do uy tín cao và có quốc tịch Pháp"

Corrections:

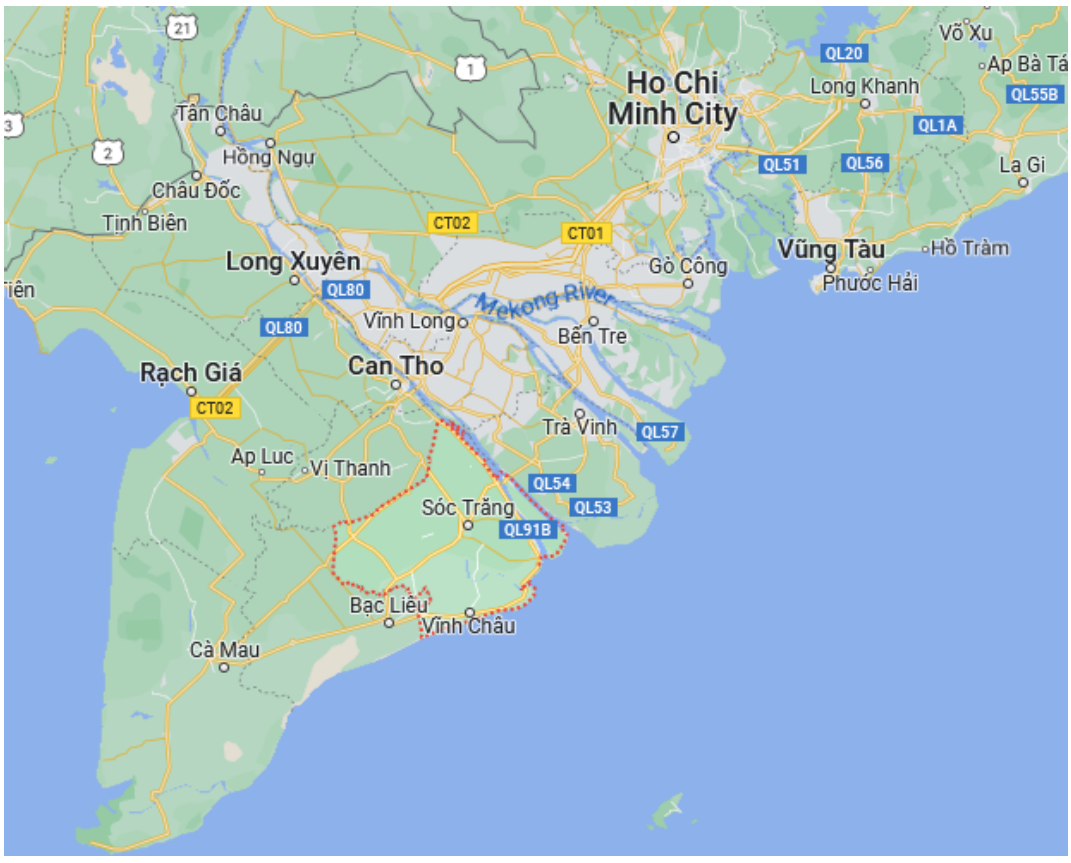
☛ 1946 Aug 25, not the beginning of 1947, was the date of Dr. Bich's arrest, per Telegram 1 from High Commissioner Admiral d'Argenlieu on 1946 Sep 11.

☛ An Phú Đông (near Saigon; see map), not Sóc Trăng, was the location of Dr. Bich's arrest, per Telegram 1 from High Commissioner Admiral d'Argenlieu on 1946 Sep 11.

Map 1, An Phu Dong, District 12, HCMC, zoomed-out. An Phu Dong is the region delimited by a red dotted line, north-east of HCMC, and directly north of Chợ Bến Thành, the central market in Saigon. (Google Map)



Map 2, An Phu Dong, District 12, HCMC, zoomed in. An Phú Đông is on the west side of the Saigon river, and on the border of HCMC, near Thu Duc on the east side of the Saigon river. (Google)



Map 3, Soc Trang, Vietnam. Sóc Trăng is south-west of HCMC, and is twice as far as Bến Tre from HCMC.

Map 4, Soc Trang, Vietnam zoomed in (Google)

☛ Dr. Bich did not have French citizenship at the time of his arrest.

Nguyen Ngoc Nhut, Bich's brother, hero of the resistance

Nhut, a French-educated engineer and a Francophone anticolonialist like Bich, fought against the French colonialist on the side of the Viet Minh, and died after 3 years incarcerated in a French colonialist prison.

Photos by Nguyen Ngoc Chau

Ref: Nguyen-Hung (2003), *Dũng khí Nguyễn Ngọc Nhựt (The Heroic Nguyen Ngoc Nhut)*, Nam Bộ Nhân Vật Chí (History of notable personalities in South Vietnam), Trẻ (Youth), Ho-Chi-Minh City, Vietnam.

NOTE: The reference above was communicated by Nguyen Ngoc Chau to Vu Quoc Loc on 2023.02.11 via email.

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